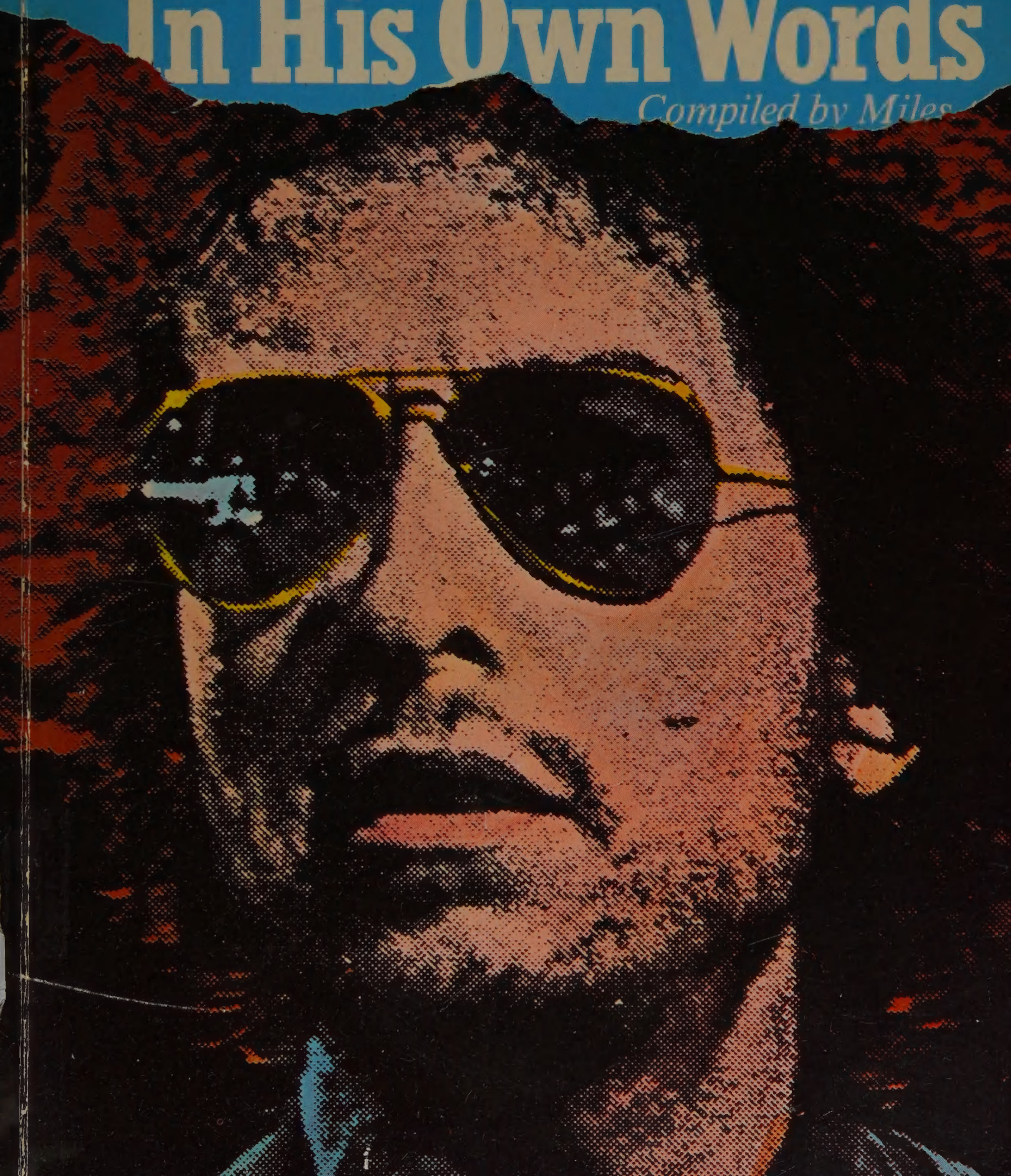
Bob Dylan
In His Own Words

Compiled by Miles



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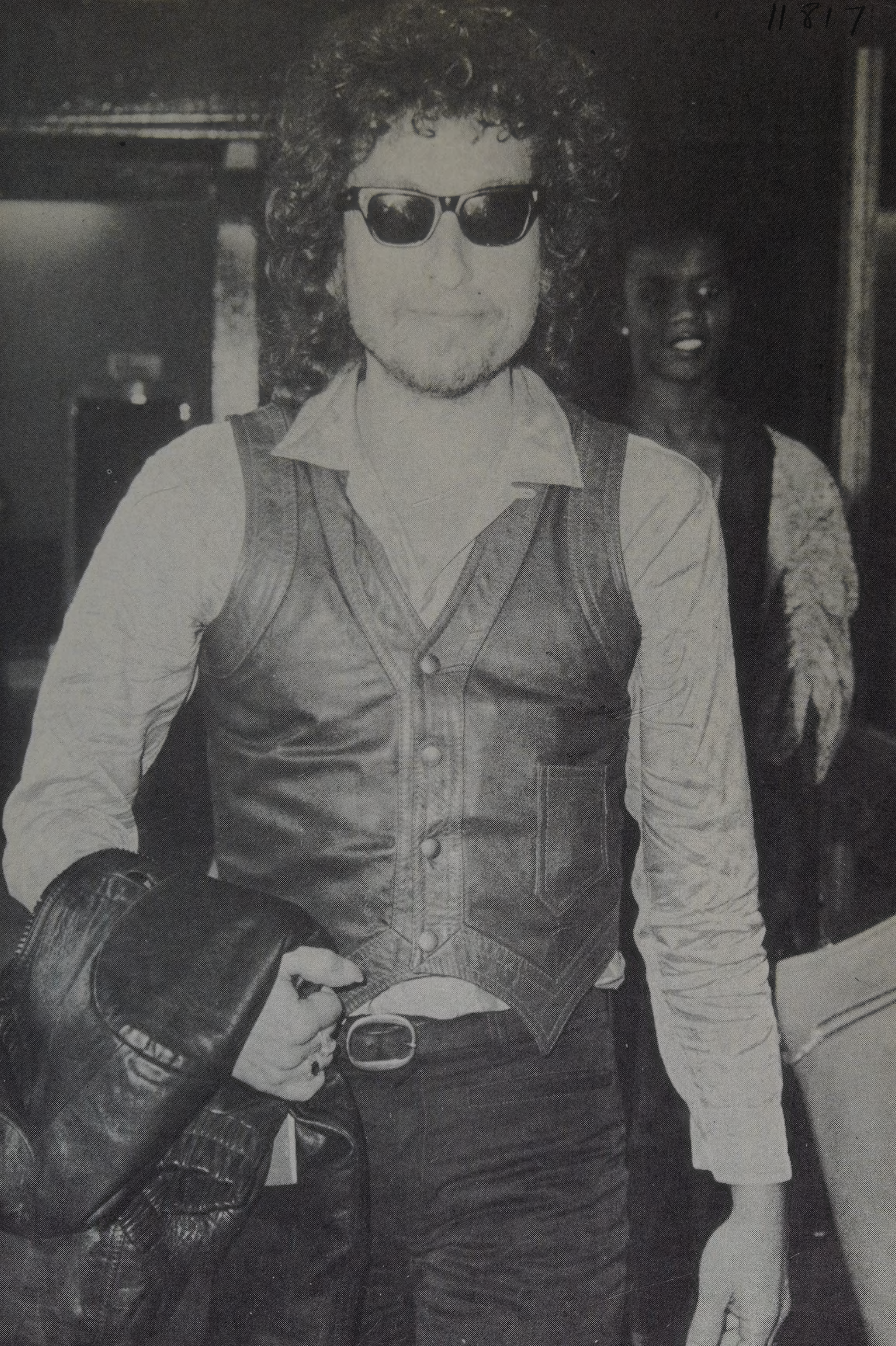

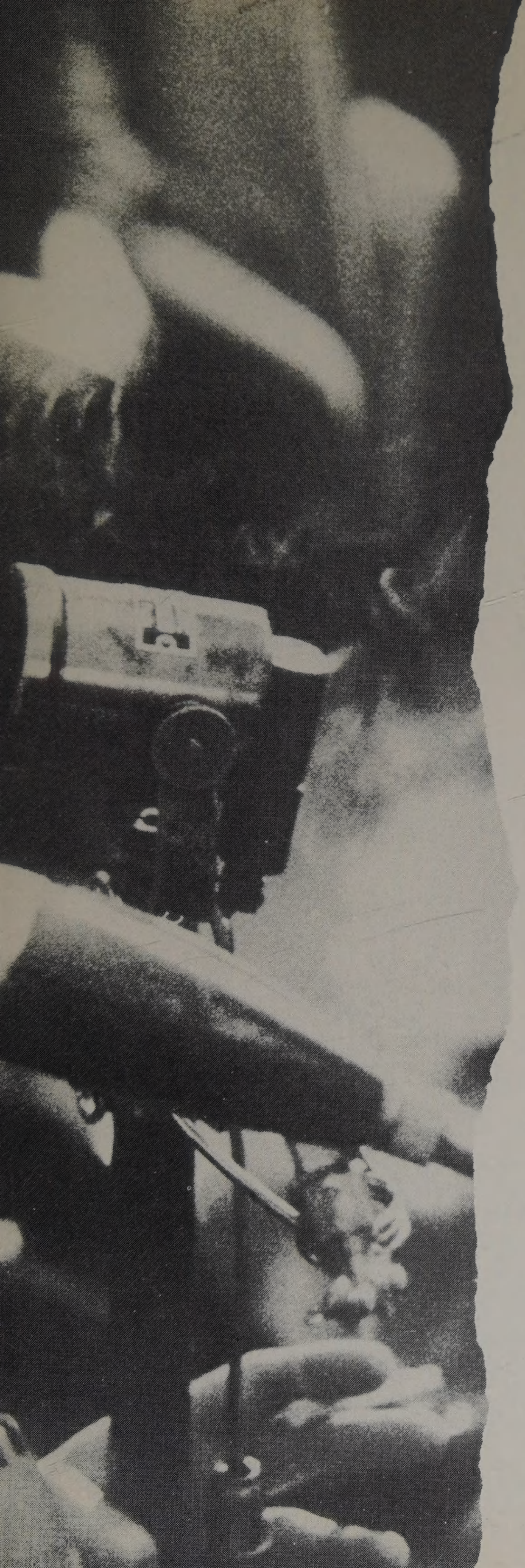

Bob Dylan In His Own Words.

Compiled by Miles.
Edited by Pearce Marchbank.
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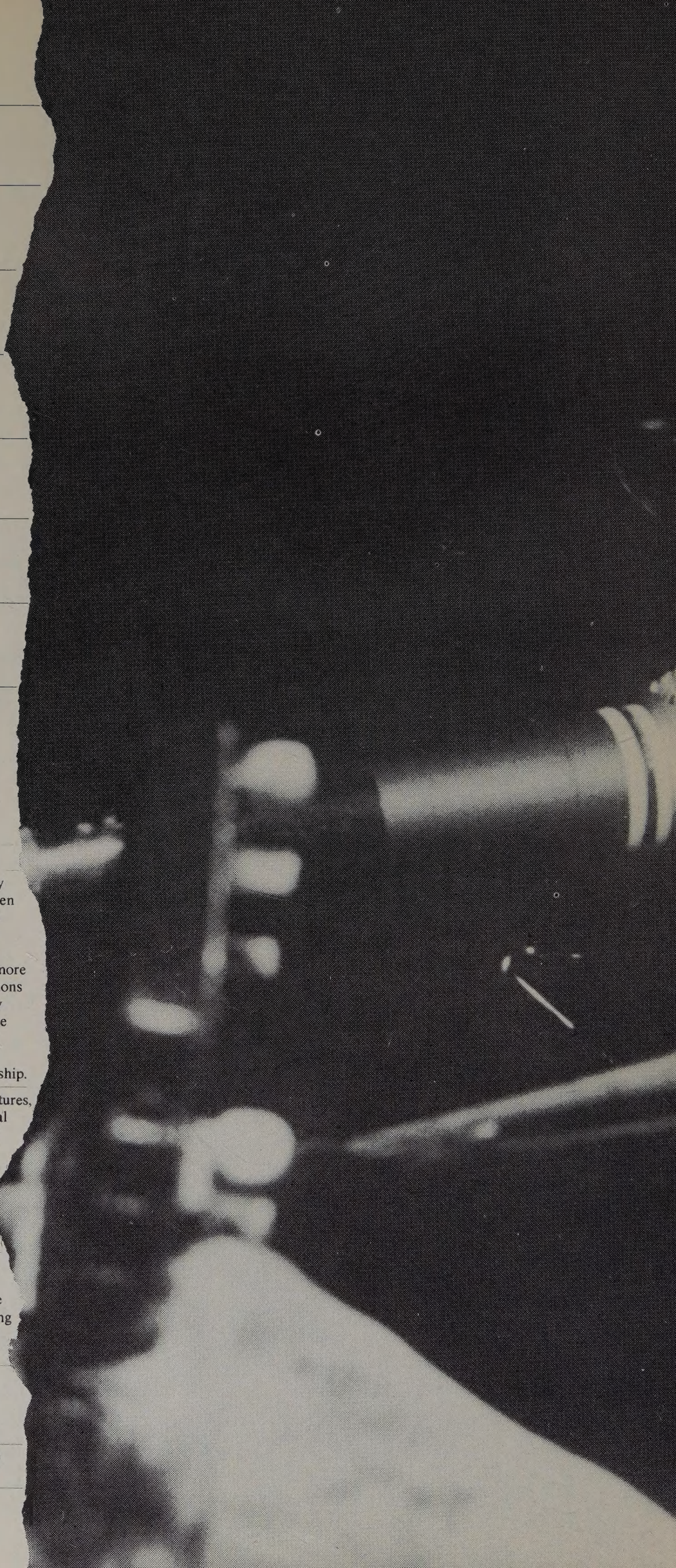


No entertainer's words have been so studied, analysed, interpreted and discussed as those of Bob Dylan. He has been quoted by everyone from Weather Underground (who took their name from his lyrics) to President Carter (who quoted lines of Dylan in his Presidential campaign speeches).

He has been called the spokesman of his generation and for millions of people his music can single-handedly sum up growing up in the Sixties. His songs paralleled the general direction of the youth movement: beginning with the Greenwich Village folk revival through the protests against the Vietnam war, a growing experimentation with drugs and finally the charm of rural life.

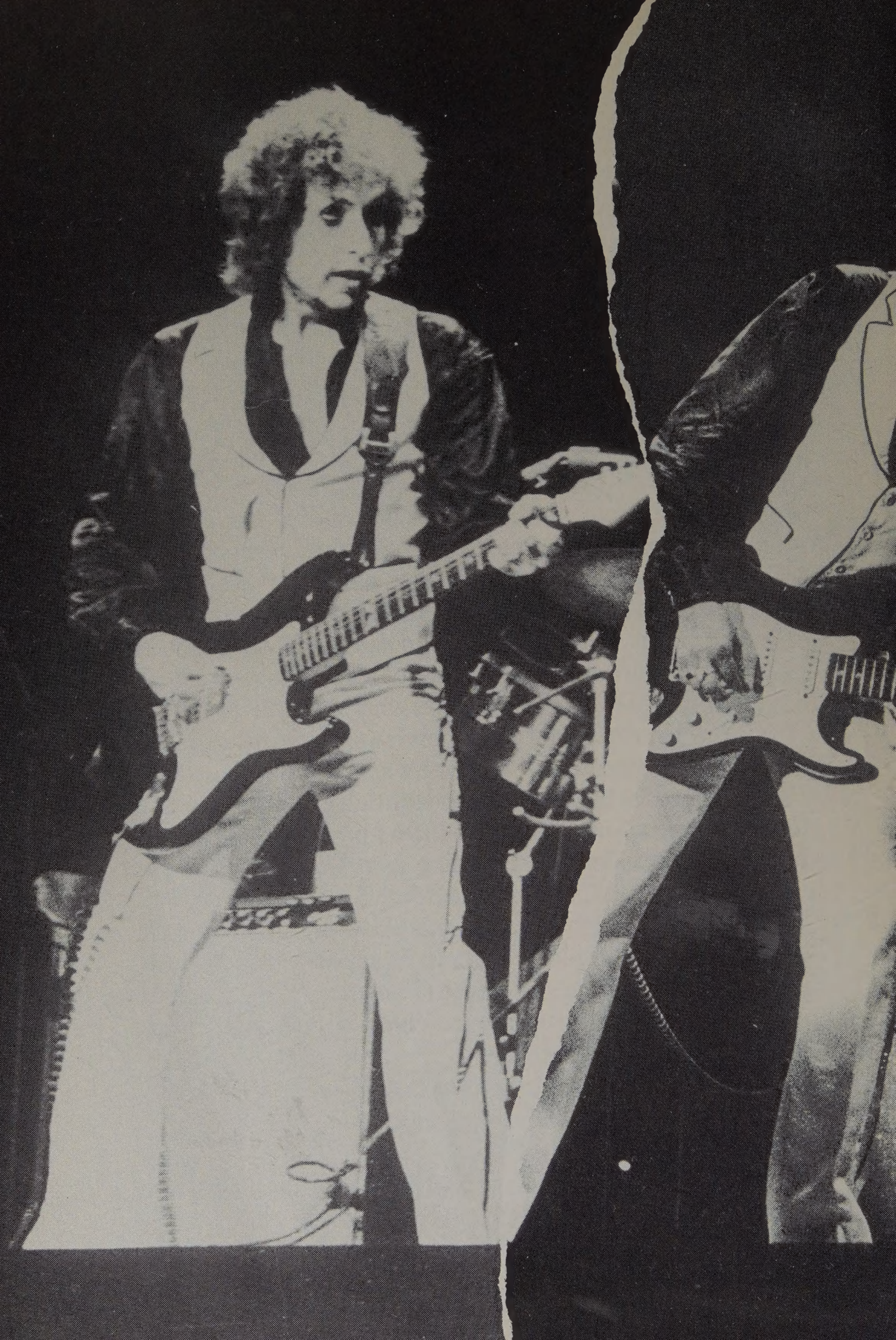
Though he has been making records since 1961 he has given surprisingly few interviews. After his crash in 1966 he remained out of sight for eighteen months and between 1969 and 1975 he only granted one major interview. Alternately there have been periods when Dylan talked a great deal, particularly in 1965 when, in addition to a number of press interviews he also did three press conferences: Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Consequently there are some periods of his career where we know his opinions in great detail and others where we know little.

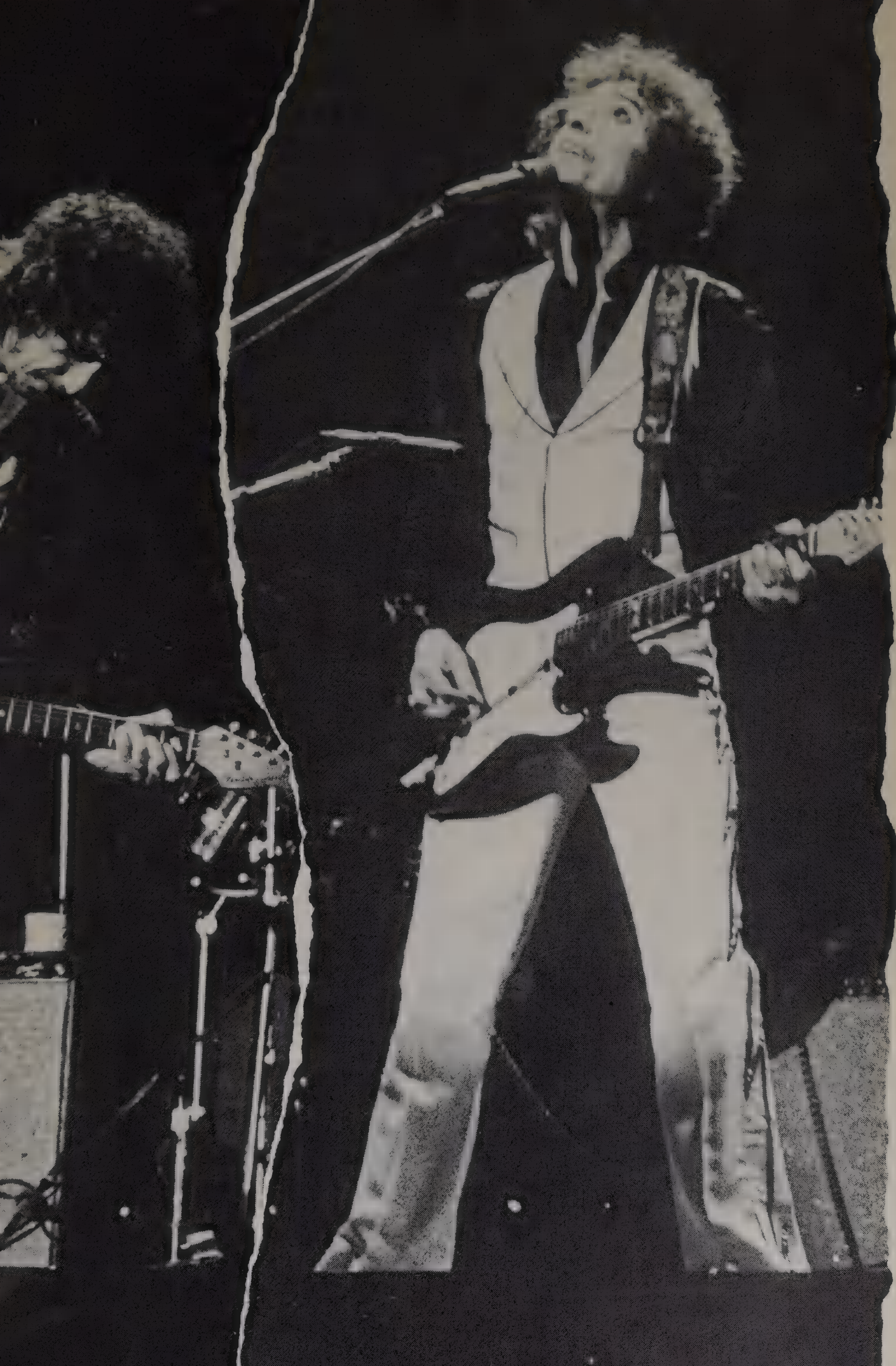
Even when Dylan did give interviews we are faced with problems. In the early days, when he was struggling to make it and create an image for himself, he often fabricated stories about his early life. One such interview is the 1961 biography in which he tells all kinds of stories about running away from home, joining a carnival and buying a guitar on the South Side of Chicago.

Later he reacted to stupidity and incomprehension on the part of newsmen by replying to their questions with strings of surrealistic and often very humorous images. Unfortunately most of these make little sense unless presented in their original context and could not be used here.

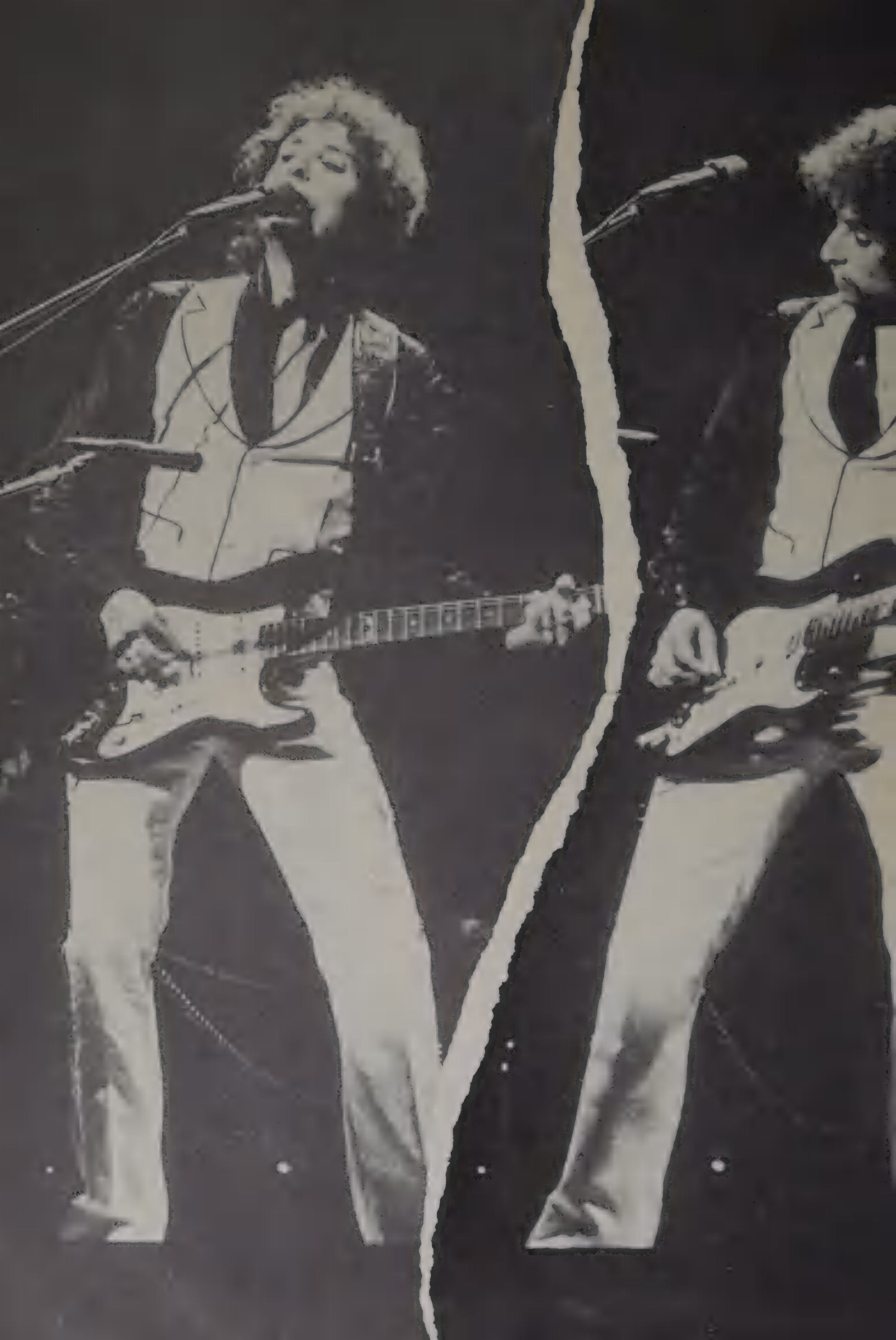
The quotes collected here have been taken from newspapers and magazine interviews and transcribed from rare tapes of TV and radio interviews and talk-shows.

They provide a valuable insight into the attitudes, ideas, wit and humour that make up Dylan the man as well as Dylan the songwriter and performer. *Miles.*





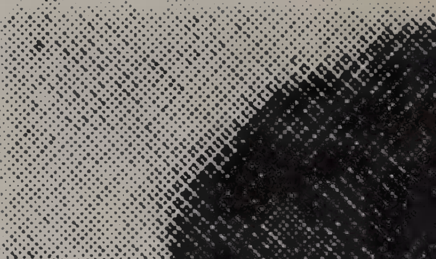
EARLS COURT CONCERT, JUNE 1978



David Westurn
Laura Wilcox

Dennis
Michael

Robert Zimmerman



Betsy Z

Biographical Fragments.

I had some amazing projections when I was a kid, but not since then. And those visions have been strong enough to keep me going through today.

They were a feeling of wonder. I projected myself toward what I might personally, humanly do in terms of creating any kinds of reality. I was born in, grew up in a place so foreign that you had to be there to picture it.

In the winter, everything was still, nothing moved. Eight months of that. You can put it together. You can have some amazing hallucinogenic experiences doing nothing but looking out your window. There is also the summer, when it gets hot and sticky and the air is very metallic. There is a lot of Indian spirit. The earth there is unusual, filled with ore. So there is something happening that is hard to define. There is a magnetic attraction there. Maybe thousands and thousands of years ago, some planet bumped into the land there. There is a great spiritual quality throughout the Midwest. Very subtle, very strong, and that is where I grew up. New York was a dream.

Malibu, January 1978.

Well, let me say that I was born really in Duluth, Minnesota – give that a little plug. That's where I was born and, uh, out in the midwest most of my life. Well, about three quarters of my life around the midwest and one quarter around the southwest – New Mexico. But then I lived in Kansas – Marysville, Kansas, and uh, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I bounced around a lot as a kid.

Was that your choice?

It was my choice partly. Partly it wasn't. I ran away a lot – stuff like that. I'd rather say just that.

When was the first time you ran away, as you put it?

I took off when I was in New Mexico, uh, Gallup, New Mexico – then to Texas, and then . . . Lived in Gallup, New Mexico and . . .

FRESHMAN, HIBBING HIGH SCHOOL ANNUAL 1951

How old were you?

Uh, about seven, eight, something like that. For the most part my base has been in upper – way upper Minnesota – almost to the border. Can I mention the town? Hibbing, Minnesota – that's a mining town – lumber town. I was there off and on ever since I was seven to seventeen.

You were in Gallup when you were seven and you took off. Were you alone?

Yeah, well, I was with a carnival when I was about thirteen and I used to travel with a carnival – all kinds of shows.

Where did you go with the carnivals?

Went all way around the midwest – Gallup, Minnesota, Texas . . .

How far did you get when you were seven and you left Gallup?

Oh . . . well, I was with an uncle and uh, I was in Texas, then Kansas. But this stuff, I can't really remember so hot – all I remember is bases – base things – where I could, uh, just base things, sort of like.

Did you go to school much?

Yeah, I went to school. I graduated. I graduated from High School – that's where I graduated – Hibbing.

I see. Did you go to High School for four years in Hibbing?

Well, I graduated – I skipped a grade.

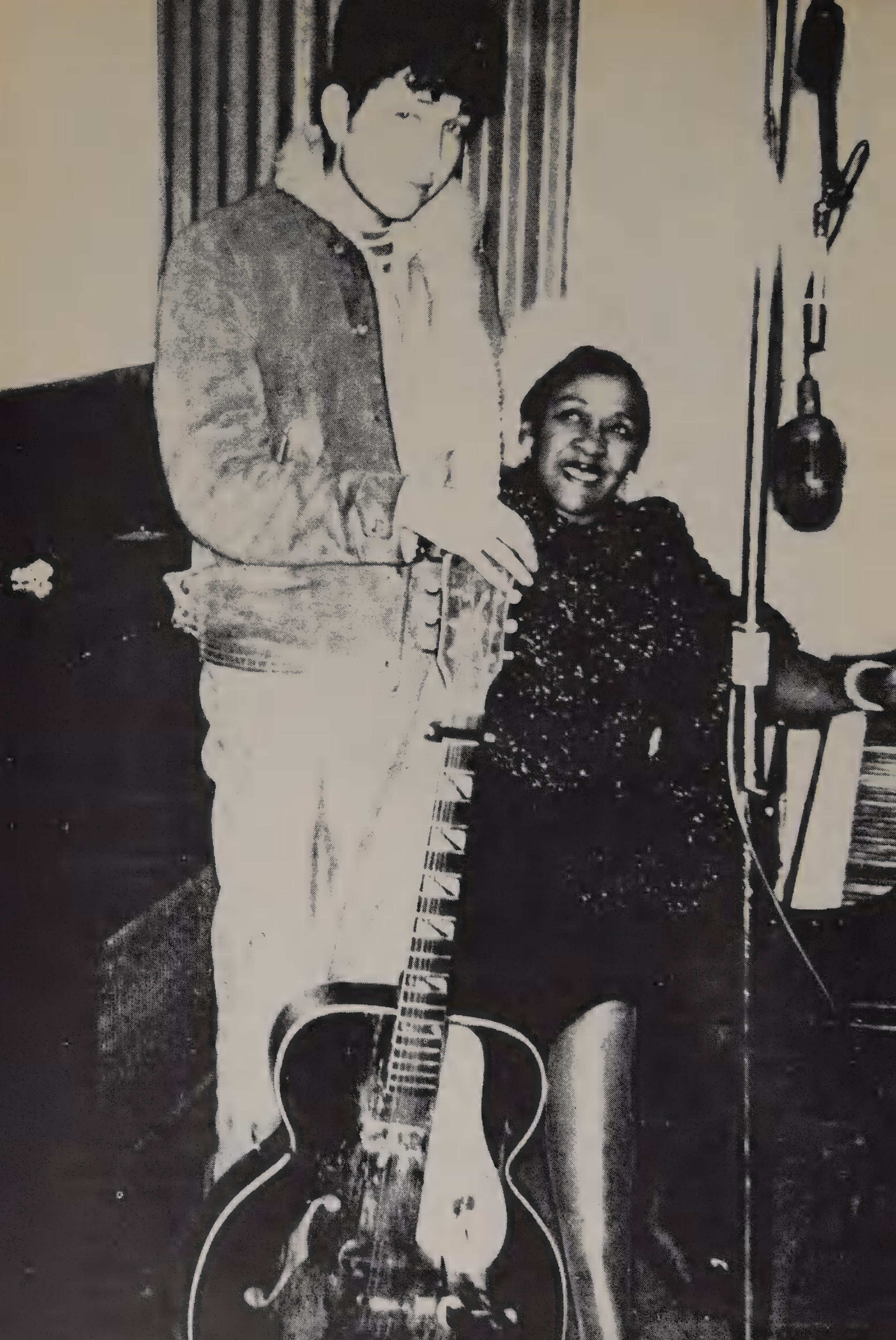
How long were you with the carnival?

I was with the carnival for a long time every year. I was with the carnival summers and even part ways into the winters.

What did you do?

Uh, roustabout. I sung around. I didn't sing for any money but I learned a lot of songs in that carnival. Lot of songs that people are singing today I learned in that carnival. That's why I know all these songs they do now – and I'm only twenty. I hear a song now – at least a folk song – I've heard a version of it, or something like it before.

And you have a good memory?



Yeah – I guess I've memorized a lot of what I've heard – things I can remember back – I write a lot of songs and I forget them. As soon as after I write them or sing them out loud – to myself or something – and then I forget them. But a lot of times when I take the time to write them down I usually sing 'em once in a while. I just wrote a new song – about, oh, last week, about New York. I wish I would have recorded it – some people are singing it now at the Blue Angel – Ian and Sylvia. I taught it to Ian.

What made you start singing?

Uh, well, I just did it you know. It was a natural thing to do. I started a long time ago too. I started singing after I started writing. I started that when I was about ten. Ten or eleven – and started out just country and western–Hank Williams, Lefty Frizel kinda things. Hank Williams had just about, had just died and I started playing sometime around there.

Was he one of your first influences?

Yeah, I sang – I tried to sing everything he would sing.

What other influences have you had?

Oh . . . I've had a lot of people that I tried to do things the way that they did. Ah, as it stands now, there's influence that maybe I've taken. I don't really know the extent of the influence that they have on what I do. Of Hank, Hank Williams was the first influence I would think. I guess for a longer period of time than anybody else influenced. Uh, nobody influenced what I wrote at that age because I didn't really see anything that anybody wrote.

Well let's put it this way, did you have any idols when you first started writing?

Yeah, well, sure, sure. Well not when I started writing, when I was singing. I never sang what I wrote until I got to be about eighteen or nineteen. I wrote songs when I was younger, fifteen, but they were songs. I wrote those. I never sang anything which I wanted to write. Y'understand? The songs I wrote at that age were just four chords rhythm and blues songs. Based on things that the Diamonds would sing, or the Crewcuts, or groups like this, the uh, the, you know, 'In The Still Of The Night' kinda songs, you know. But I don't know, you know, whatever hit me.

What are your early memories of singing?

Well I've been singing for an awful long time. First guitar I ever had was a very old guitar and the strings were about an inch from the keyboard. That's why I use a flat pick when I play now – and I never got unused to using that flat pick – because I could never *get* those strings – they were heavy string - and my fingers hurt.

How old were you?

About ten.

Who gave it to you?

Down at uh, uh, I got it in Chicago on the South Side. I think from a street singer. I didn't get it from him, I got it from a friend of his – Aravella Grey – he was a singer and let's see, there's Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I learned a lot of songs there – I learned not a lot, but I learned – I don't learn songs – I just learned ways of singing – I learned the *way* of singing I do. I didn't really learn so many songs. There was this fella there on a farm right in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a little bit out – played autoharp. And he was just a farmhand there. He was from Kansas – I learned just ways of singing from people like that. But I never really heard any other way. I played piano when I was seventeen – I played piano for this Rock and Roll singer – his name is Bobby Vee – and he's a big star now, I guess.

Now where was this?

That was in Fargo, North Dakota, then we went all round the midwest. Went to Wisconsin Iowa, toured around there, and then I left.

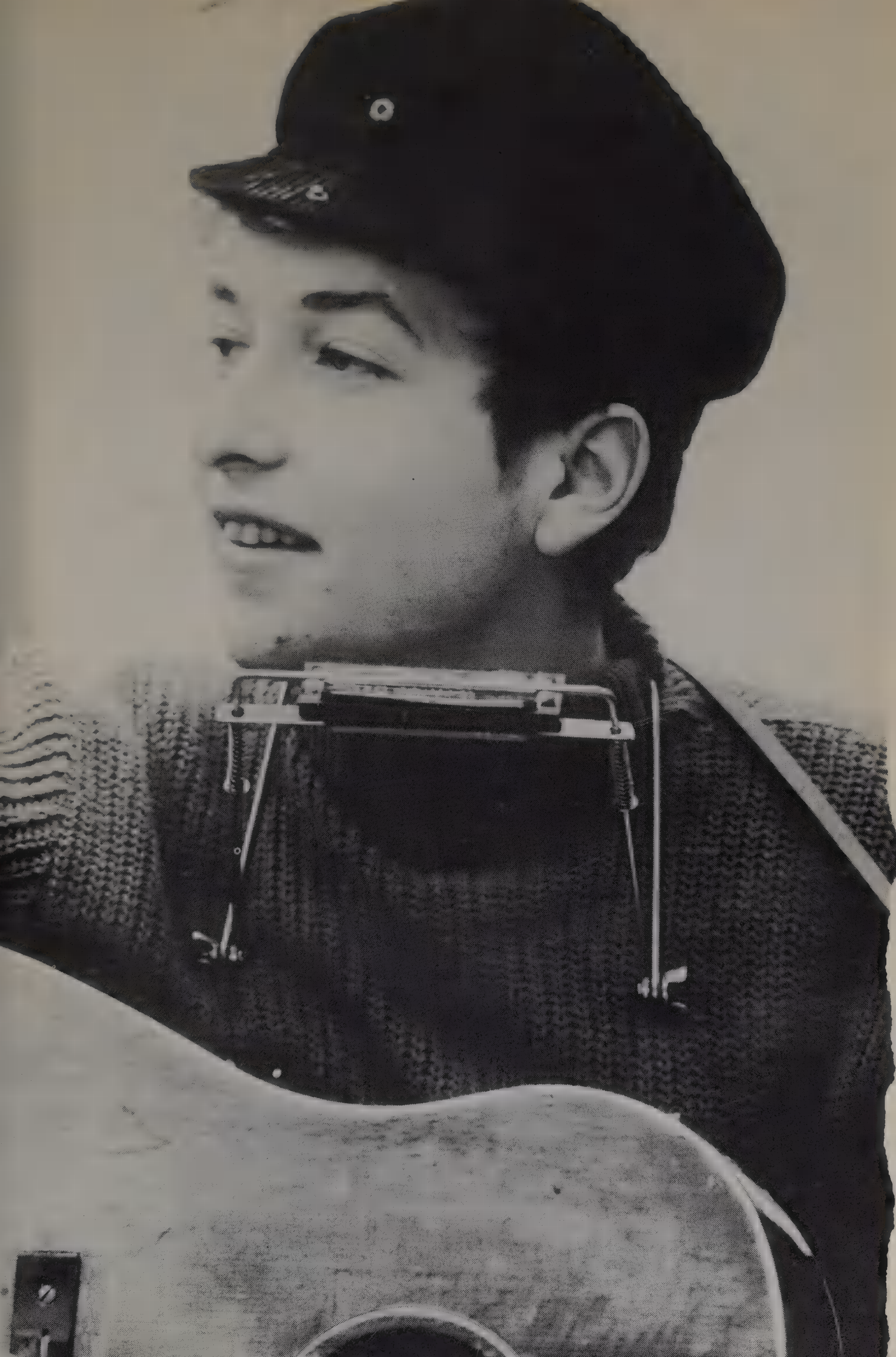
How long were you with him?

I was with him for about, uh, every night–just about every night – for about a month or so –and then as soon as I left him he got another recording label and then I saw his picture in big picture magazines and that kind of stuff not too long after that. So that was sort of a disappointment. But I always figured that – I just like to feel that I know where I'm at – because if I know where I'm at then I figure I got anybody beat. Because then if nothing happens that I expect to, then if I don't get some girl that I like, or if I don't get something like that, I always just figure that if I know where I'm at, then nothing will hurt me and then I'll never be disappointed. Then if something comes up you know, then it's for the good. I mean, it's not really pessimistic or anything like that, but it's just that I like to feel that I know where I'm at.

Do you?

Yeah – pretty sure I do – I'm at the stage where I never thought I could sort of look back and see something but I knew I could sing better than all those people who are singing now. And I knew that I could sing the same songs much better if only I had a chance to and I'm just getting that chance to in New York. I had the chance to around the country – but I can't reach

WITH VICTORIA SPIVEY AT A RECORDING SESSION, 1961



FIRST RECORDING SESSION FOR CBS, NOVEMBER 1961

as many people around the country. And I've had the chance just breaking for me now in New York.

If I'm on stage, my idols, even my biggest idol, when I'm on stage all the time is Charlie Chaplin. And, uh, it's, uh, well, it takes a while to explain it but I'd say he's one of THE men!

When did you first see Chaplin?

Ah, I seen some of his films. I just knew who he was and that kind of stuff. Vaudeville type of thing. Will Rogers. And I never really met anything . . . I never came across anything until . . . I never came across . . . I never lived in a big city until I lived in New York and uh, I don't think it's got the best of me. At least I know it hasn't got the better part of me. In fact I don't think it's touched . . . it might have touched me a little bit. In fact it HAS touched me a little bit. But I never lived in a city that was more than 15,000 people. And there's an awful lot of difficulty here . . .

New York City, August 1961.

The first thing that turned me on to folk singing was Odetta. I heard a record of hers in a record store, back when you could listen to records right there in the store. That was in '58 or something like that. Right then and there, I went out and traded my electric guitar and amplifier for an acoustical guitar, a flat-top Gibson.

I learned all the songs on that record. It was her first and the songs were 'Mule Skinner', 'Jack of Diamonds', 'Water Boy', 'Buked and Scorned'.

I saved the money I had made working on my daddy's truck and bought a Silvertone guitar from Sears Roebuck. I was 12. I just bought a book of chords and began to play.

The first song I wrote was a song to Brigitte Bardot.

I don't recall too much of it. It had only one chord. Well, it is all in the heart. Anyway, from Odetta, I went to Harry Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, little by little uncovering more as I went along. Finally, I was doing nothing but Carter Family and Jesse Fuller songs.

Then later I got to Woody Guthrie, which opened up a whole new world at that time. I was still only 19 or 20.

I was pretty fanatical about what I wanted to do, so after learning about 200 of Woody's songs, I went to see him and I waited for the right moment to visit him in a hospital in Morristown, New Jersey. I took a bus from New York, sat with him and sang his songs. I kept visiting him a lot and got on friendly terms with him. From that point on, it gets a little foggy.

Malibu, January 1978.

ODETTA

Changes Name To Dylan.

My name's Steve, Dylan.

Dylan! I always thought that was my name.

New York City, January 1966.

Bob, is it true that you've changed your name? If so, what was your real name?

My real name was Knezelvitz and I changed it to avoid obvious relatives that come up to you in different parts of the country and want tickets to concerts and stuff like that . . uh?

It was Knevevitch?

Knevovitch yes.

That was the first or last name?

That was the first name. [*audience laughter and applause*] I don't really want to tell you what the last name was.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

We're speaking with Bob Dylan. Do you say Dylan or Dielan?

Oh, I say Dylan. Dielan. I say anything that you say really.

Did you take it from the Welsh poet?

No, no. That's uh, I guess I would say, a rumour, made up by people who like to simplify things. It's a name in my family, but uh. It's from my uncle's family. It's not my first father's name, it's the name of my mother's, my mother's side of the family and it's uh, spelled, D-I-L-L-O-N, and I uh, changed it! From there, from there.

Canada, March 1966.

I took the Dylan because I have an uncle named Dillon. I changed the spelling but only because it looked better. I've read some of Dylan Thomas' stuff, and it's not the same as mine. We're different.

Chicago, November 1965.

Get that straight, I didn't change my name in honour of Dylan Thomas. That's just a story. I've done more for Dylan Thomas than he's ever done for me. Look how many kids are probably reading his poetry now because they heard that story.

New York City, July 1966.

I haven't read that much of Dylan Thomas. It's a common thing to change your name. It isn't that incredible. Many people do it. People change their town, change their country. New

appearance, new mannerisms. Some people have many names. I wouldn't pick a name unless I thought I was that person. Sometimes you are held back by your name. Sometimes there are advantages to having a certain name. Names are labels so we can refer to one another. But deep inside us we don't have a name. We have no name. I just chose that name and it stuck.

My forebears were Russian. I don't know how they got a German name coming from Russia. Maybe they got their name coming off the boat or something. To make a big deal over somebody's name, you're liable to make a big deal about any little thing. But getting back to Dylan Thomas, it wasn't that I was inspired by reading some of his poetry and going "Aha!" and changing my name to Dylan. If I thought he was that great, I would have sung his poems, and could just as easily have changed my name to Thomas.

Malibu, January 1968.

Dylan Arrives In New York.

. . . and I was very stupid at the time, and I was with a friend of mine, and I played. And they flipped, and I figured . . .

Which café?

Café Wha. I didn't know anything, and they were havin' a hootenanny and that kind of stuff. And I asked if they would give me money to play. And he looked at me and he said he would. "I'll give you a dollar." So he gave me a dollar to play in the hootenanny, no, in fact it came to a dollar-fifty. And I played there and they flipped. They really did. So I figured if they liked me so much that maybe someone would have a place to stay that night 'cause I didn't have a place to stay that night. So I asked from the stage and about four hands went up. So my buddy and I, we sort of went and checked 'em all and picked out a fellow. He was with a girl. And my buddy says to me, "You don't look so hot," that's what he said, he said, "He looks pretty gay." [*laughs*] And I said, uh, I didn't know anything about that kind of stuff, well I knew, anyway, he was with a girl. And, so, we went up with him. And the girl got off at 34th Street and we got off at 42nd Street. [*laughs*] Well, we went in a bar first before we went to find a place to stay and we met his friend Dora. Dora was his friend who stayed with him. And we all went to a party. And THAT was my first night in New York.

New York City, August 1961.

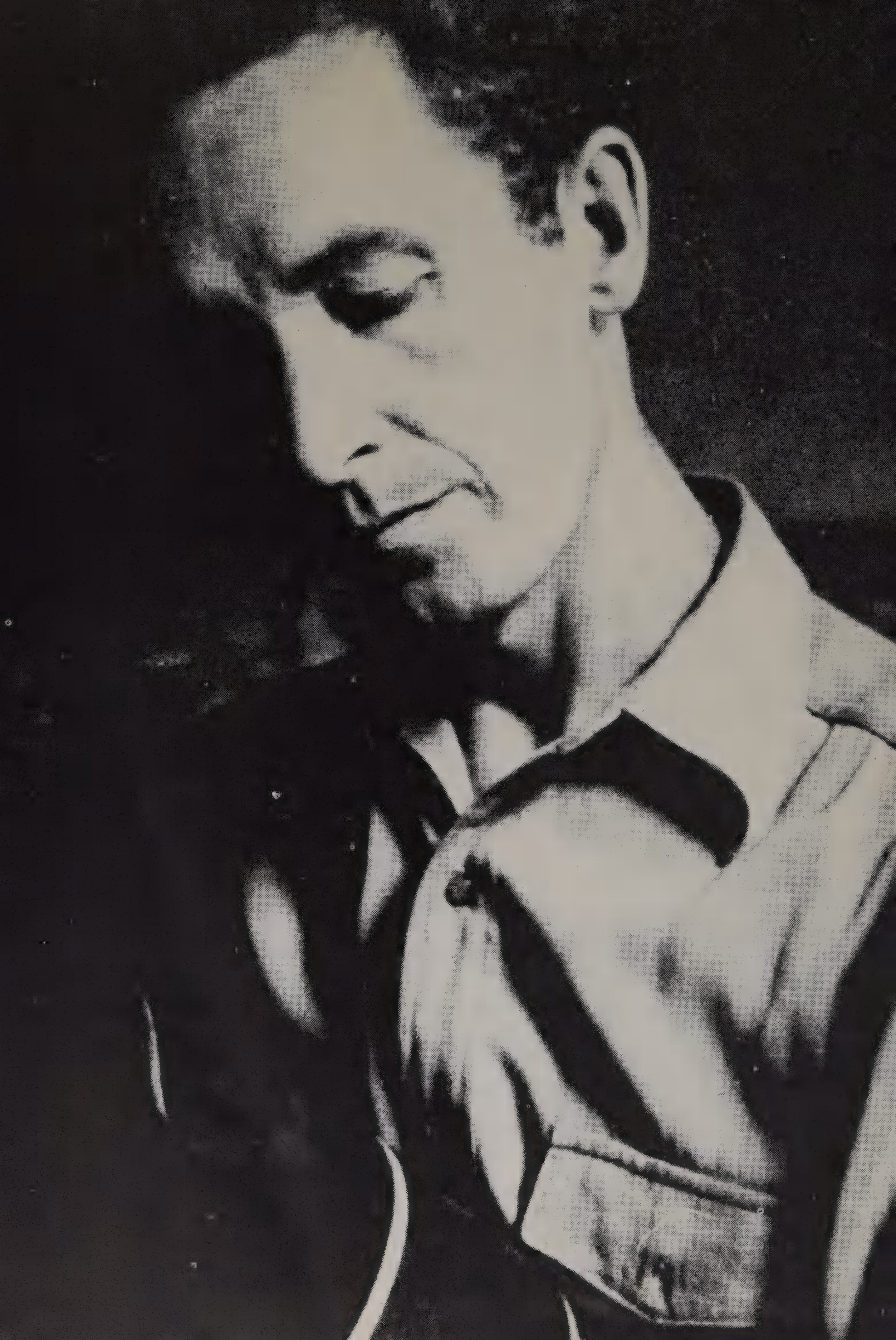
NEWPORT 1963

Talking Folklore Center.

I came down to New York town
Got out and started walking around
I's up around Sixty-second Street
All of a sudden a cop on his beat;
Said my hair was too long – said my boots
were too dirty,
Said my hat was un-American, said he'd
throw me in jail.

So I got on a subway and took a seat,
Got out on forty-second street,
I met this fellow named Delores there
He started rubbin' his hands through my
hair;——

I figured somethin' was wrong so I ran through
ten hot dog stands,
Four movie houses and a couple a dancing
studios to get back on the subway train.



The wind it blew me north and south,
It blew me in a coffee house,
I met this fellow with sun glasses on,
He told me he sung folksongs;——
I believed him 'cause he was wearing sun
glasses.

He sung "Scarlet Ribbons" 'bout ten times or
more
He sung "Michael Row the Boat Ashore,"
He sung "Where Do All the Flowers Go?"
There was no folksong he didn't know;——
The ones he didn't know he didn't like anyway.

On MacDougal Street I saw a cubby hole,
I went in to get out of the cold,
Found out after I entered
The place was called the Folklore Center;——
Owned by Izzy Young—he's always in back–
or the center.

They got real records and real books,
Anybody can walk in and look,
You don't have to own a Cadillac car,
Or a nine hundred and fifty-two dollar
guitar;——
Do like most people do—walk in—walk
around—walk out.

But that's not the way you see,
That ain't the way it oughta be,
There's just one way a lookin' at it,
You shouldn't take this place for granted;——
That'll always be here.

So go down and buy a record or book,
Don't just walk around and look,
You can do that when you go uptown,
When you come down here you're on common
ground;——
Common people ground—common guitar
people ground,
WE NEED EVERY INCH OF IT!

Folk Music People.

I sense they're liking me. Maybe not the music so much. But, maybe they don't even like the music but I feel like if they saw me on the street, or playing someplace, I feel like they wouldn't be so friendly.

New York City, August 1961.

I like the land, the people are strange in the west. I like some of the people. Don't like some of the people. Hard, which I never could see, very hard people. And down south it's worse than that. I can't stand city people from the south. I hate. I can't stand, anywhere they're thinking . . .

New York City, August 1961.

Sing Out was the only magazine you could read about those people. They were special people and you kept your distance from them.

Well, they were the type of people you just observed and learned from, but you would never approach them. *I* never would, anyway, I remember being too shy. But it took me a long time to realize the New York crowd wasn't that different from the singers I'd seen in my own home town. They were right there, on the backroad circuit, people like the Stanley Brothers, playing for a few nights. If I had known then what I do now, I probably would have taken off when I was 12 and followed Bill Monroe. 'Cause I could have gotten to the same place.

It was Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac who inspired me at first—and where I came from, there wasn't the sophisticated transportation you have now. To get to New York, you'd have to go by thumb. Anyway, those were the old days when John Denver used to play sideman. Many people came out of that period of time. Actors, dancers, politicians, a lot of people were involved with that period of time.

I think it was the last go-round for people to gravitate to New York. People had gone to New York since the 1800s, I think. For me it was pretty fantastic. I mean, it was like, there was a café—what was it called? I forgot the name, but it was Aaron Burr's old livery stable. You know, just being in that area, that part of the world was enlightening. I don't think it happened after that. I think it finished, New York died after that, late to middle Sixties.

Mass communication killed it. It turned into one big carnival side show. That is what I sensed and I got out of there when it was just starting to happen. The atmosphere changed from one of creativity and isolation to one where the attention would be turned more to the show. People were still dealing with illusion and believing it. I don't know when it happened. Sometime around Peter, Paul and Mary, when they got pretty big. It happened around the same time. For a long time, I was famous only in certain circles in New York, Philadelphia and Boston, and that was fine enough for me. I am an eyewitness to that time. I am one of the survivors of that period. You know as well as I do that a lot of people didn't make it. They didn't live to tell about it, anyway.

NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL 1964

People were still dealing with illusion and delusion at that time. The times really change and they don't change. There were different characters back then and there were things that were undeveloped that are fully developed now. But back then, there was space, space—well, there wasn't any pressure. There was all the time in the world to get it done. There wasn't any pressure, because nobody knew about it. You know, I mean, music people were like a bunch of cotton pickers. They see you on the side of the road picking cotton, but nobody stops to give a shit. I mean, it wasn't that important. So Washington Square was a place where people you knew or met congregated every Sunday and it was like a world of music. You know the way New York is; I mean, there could be 20 different things happening in the same kitchen or in the same park; there could be 200 bands in one park in New York; there could be 15 jug bands, five bluegrass bands and an old crummy string band, 20 Irish confederate groups, a Southern mountain band, folk singers of all kinds and colours, singing John Henry work songs. There was bodies piled sky-high doing whatever they felt like doing. Bongo drums, conga drums, saxophone players, xylophone players, drummers of all nations and nationalities. Poets who would rant and rave from the statues. You know, those things don't happen anymore. But then that was what was happening. It was all street. Cafés would be open all night. It was a European thing that never really took off. It has never really been a part of this country. That is what New York was like when I got there.

Mass communication killed it all. Oversimplification. I don't know whose idea it was to do that, but soon after, the people moved away.

Malibu, January 1978.

I'm not a folk-singer. I just sing a certain place that's all. And . . .

Is Woody a folk-singer?

Woody was a folk-singer, Woody was a folk singer.

Why do you say you're not?

Ah, Woody was a folk-singer to the point. Woody was a glorified folk-singer. Woody was a man that went back . . . don't print this on the record . . .

No man, no . . .

Well you see, Woody was a man who dwelled on a simple record because he was getting attention for it . . .

I play the piano. I used to play the piano. I used to play great piano, very great. I used to play piano like Little Richard stuff only an octave higher. And everything came out . . . He played, he had a big mistake. His records were great records but could have been greater records. His mistake was he played too low. If he had played high everything would have compensated. Do you listen to Little Richard?

No.

Well, Little Richard's something else. He's a preacher now. But I sort of played the piano in his style. And I played everything high and amplified it.

New York City, August 1961.

I'm alone up here. I was over here three years back and on the streets. In two years I'll be gone and you'll be talking to someone else.

London, April 1965.

Dylan Goes Electric.

It was in Newport. Well I did this very crazy thing. So, you know, [*laughter*] I mean I didn't really know what was going to happen, but they certainly booed, I'll tell you that! You could hear it all over the place. I don't know who they were though, and I'm certain whoever it was did it twice as loud as they normally would. They kind of quieted down some at Forest Hills although they did it there, too. They've done it just about all over except in Texas, they didn't boo us in Texas or in Atlanta, or in Boston, or in Ohio. They've done it in just about . . . or in Minneapolis, they didn't do it there. They've done it a lot of other places. I mean, they must be pretty rich to be able to go someplace and boo. I couldn't afford it if I was in their shoes.

San Francisco, December 1965.

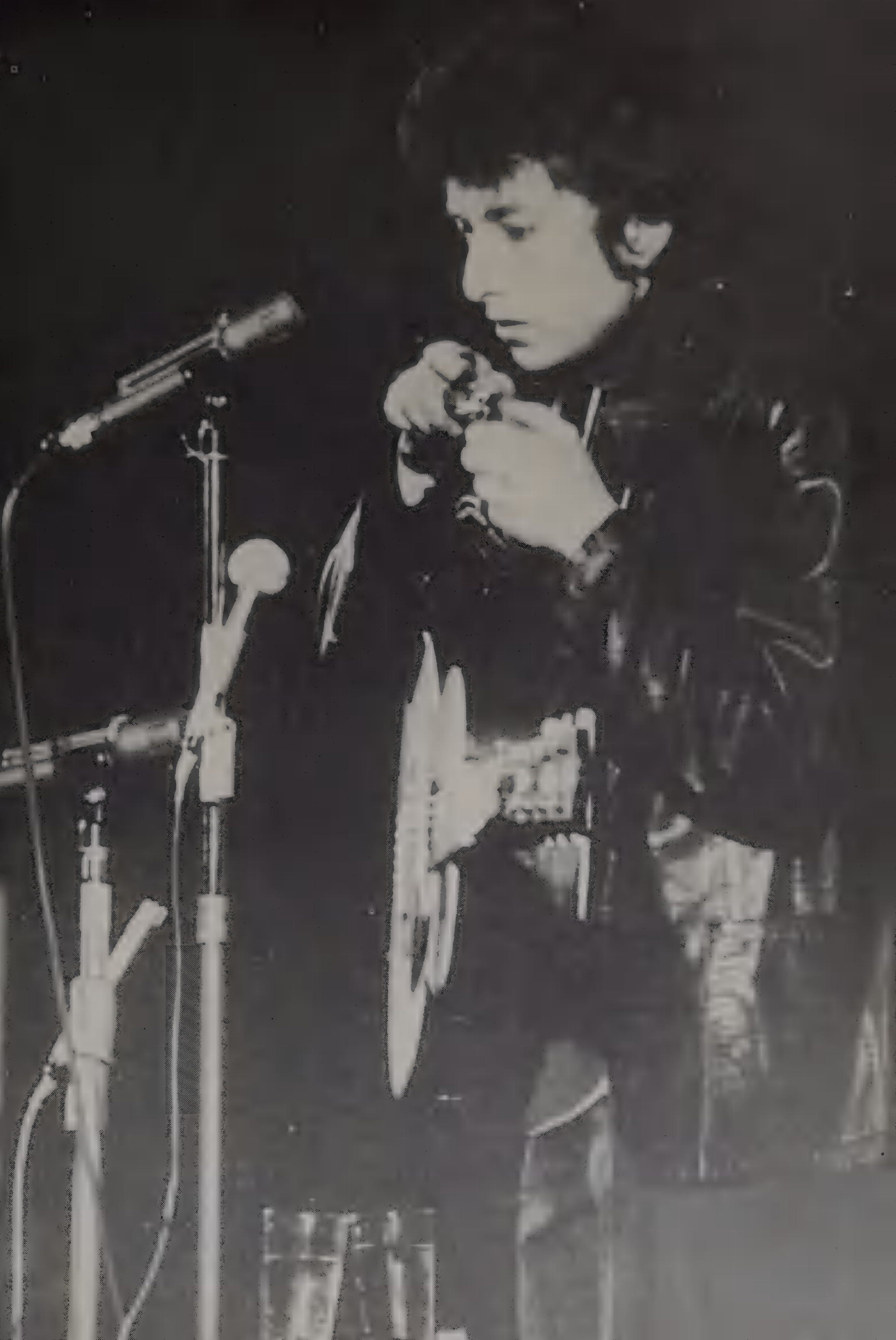
Has there been any more booing when you play electric?

Oh, there's booing . . . you can't tell where the booing's going to come up. Can't tell at all. It comes up in the weirdest, strangest places and when it comes up it's quite a thing in itself. I figure there's a little "boo" in all of us.

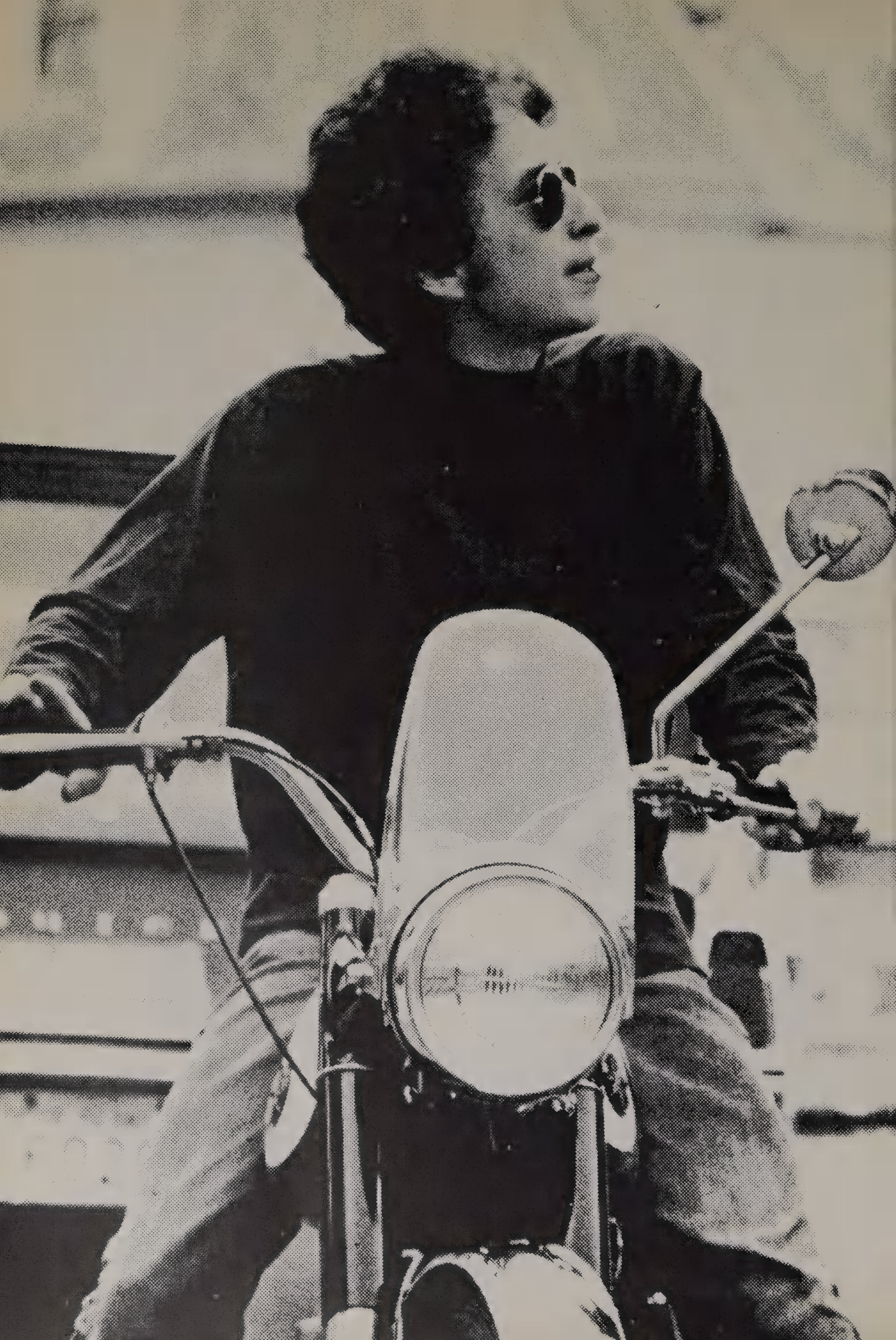
San Francisco, December 1965.

Like I don't even know who those people were, anyway I think there's always a little boo in all of us. I wasn't shattered by it. I didn't cry. I don't even understand it. I mean, what are they going to shatter, my ego? And it doesn't even exist, they can't hurt me with a boo.

Chicago, November 1965.



PRESS CONFERENCE, LONDON, 1966



I was kind of stunned. But I can't put anybody down for coming and booing; after all, they paid to get in. They could have been maybe a little quieter and not so persistent, though. There were a lot of old people there, too; lots of whole families had driven down from Vermont, lots of nurses and their patients, and well, like they just came to hear some relaxing hoedowns, you know, maybe an Indian polka or two. And just when everything's going all right, here I come on, and the whole place turns into a beer factory. There were a lot of people there who were very pleased that I got booed. I saw them afterward. I do resent somewhat, though, that everybody that booed said they did it because they were old fans.

New York City, January 1966.

Those *were* exciting times. We were doing it before anybody knew we would—or could. We didn't know what it was going to turn out to be. Nobody thought of it as folk-rock at the time. There were some people involved in it, like the Byrds, and I remember Sonny and Cher and the Turtles and the early Rascals. It began coming out on the radio. I mean, I had a couple of hits in a row. That was the most I ever had in a row—two. The top ten was filled with that kind of sound—the Beatles, too—and it was exciting, those days were exciting. It was the sound of the streets. It still is. I symbolically hear that sound wherever I am.

That ethereal twilight light, you know. It's the sound of the street with the sunrays, the sun shining down at a particular time on a particular type of building. A particular type of people walking on a particular type of street. It's an outdoor sound that drifts even into open windows that you can hear. The sound of bells and distant railroad trains and arguments in apartments and the clinking of silverware and knives and forks and beating with leather straps. It's all—it's all there. Just lack of a jackhammer, you know.

No jackhammer sounds, no airplane sounds. All pretty natural sounds. It's water, you know, water trickling down a brook. It's light flowing through the—usually it's the crack of dawn. Music filters out to me in the crack of dawn.

Sometimes. You get a little spacy when you've been up all night, so you don't really have the power to form it. But that's the sound I'm trying to get across. I'm not just up there re-creating old blues tunes or trying to invent some surrealistic rhapsody.

It's the sound and the words. Words don't interfere with it. They—they—punctuate it. You know, they give it purpose. [*Pause*] And all the ideas for my songs, all the influences, all come out of that. All the influences all the feelings, all the ideas come from that. I'm not doing it to see how good I can sound, or how perfect the melody can be, or how intricate the details can be woven or how perfectly written something can be. I don't care about those things.

Malibu, January 1978.

NEWPORT 1964

Tours.

I want to get some thigh-length boots while I'm here. No—better than that, waist-length. Just like Robin Hood.

I'm a bit fed up with these here boots I've got on. I call them my Damon Runyan boots.

I have weak eyes. Try them for yourself. See the world as Bob Dylan sees it.

London, April 1965.

How long is it since you saw your mother?

About three months.

Why don't you see her more often? Doesn't she approve of your music?

Well, my mother doesn't approve of it but my grandmother does.

I see you've got about twelve people there with you: What's that, a band? Don't you play pure music any longer?

No, man, that's not a band with me. They're all friends of my grandmother . . .

Sydney, Australia, 1966.
Dylan interviewing Dylan.

The Accident.

The back wheel locked, I think. I lost control, swerving from left to right. Next thing I know I was in someplace I never heard of—Middletown, I think—with my face cut up so I got some scars and my neck busted up pretty good.

I saw my whole life pass in front of me.

29th July 1966.

What was I doing? I don't know. It came time. Was it when I had the motorcycle accident? Well, I was straining pretty hard and couldn't have gone on living that way much longer. The fact that I made it through what I did is pretty miraculous. But, you know, sometimes you get too close to something and you got to get away from it to be able to see it. And something like that happened to me at the time.

Those were in my wild, unnatural moments. I'm glad those feelings passed.

Malibu, January 1978.

The turning point was back in Woodstock. A little after the accident. Sitting around one night under a full moon, looked out into the bleak woods and I said, "Something's gotta change."

There was some business that had to be taken care of that we don't have to go into. But it was too much. It finally broke the camel's back. Now it's the same old me again.

Montreal, January 1974.

Rolling Thunder Review.

We were all very close. We had this fire going ten years ago and now we've got it burning again . . .

Plymouth, Massachusetts, October 1975.

Religion & Astrology.

I'm interested in what and who a Jew is. I'm interested in the fact that Jews are Semites, like Babylonians, Hittites, Arabs, Syrians, Ethiopians. But a Jew is different because a lot of people hate Jews. There's something going on here that's hard to explain.

Malibu, September 1976.

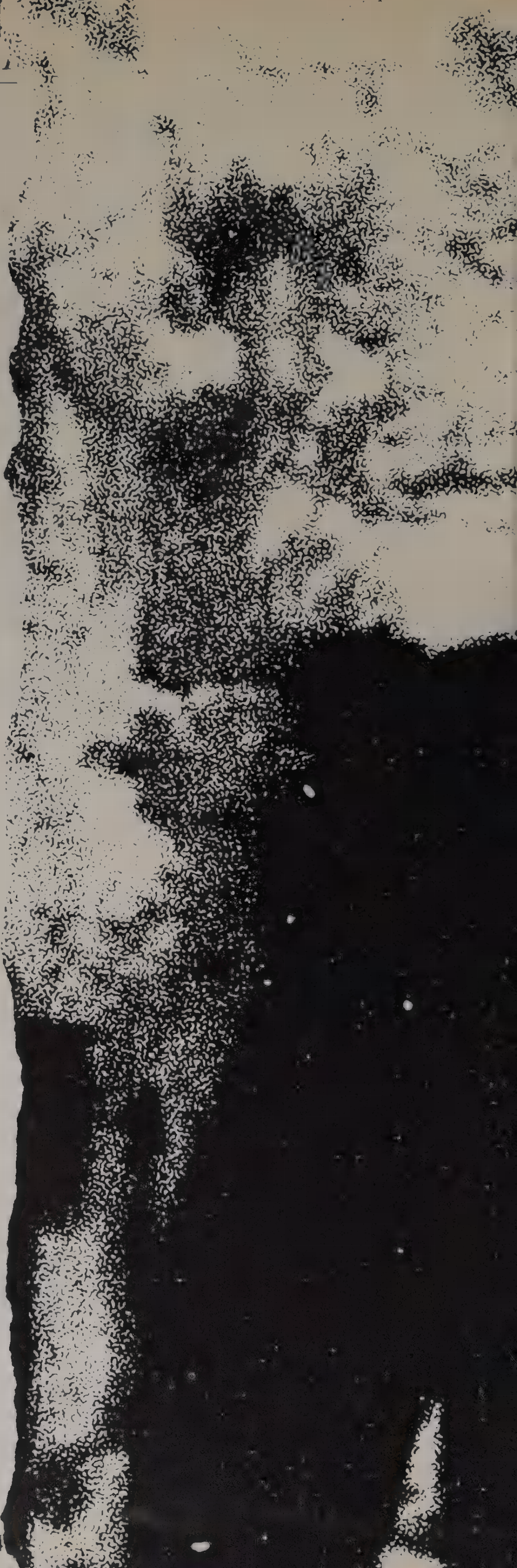
I can see God in a daisy. I can see God at night in the wind and rain. I see creation just about everywhere. The highest form of song is prayer. King David's, Solomon's, the wailing of a coyote, the rumble of the Earth. It must be wonderful to be God. There's so much going on out there that you can't get to it all. It would take longer than forever.

You're talking to someone who doesn't comprehend the values most people operate under. Greed and lust I can understand, but I can't understand the values of definition and confinement. Definition destroys. Besides, there's nothing definite in this World.

Malibu, September 1976.

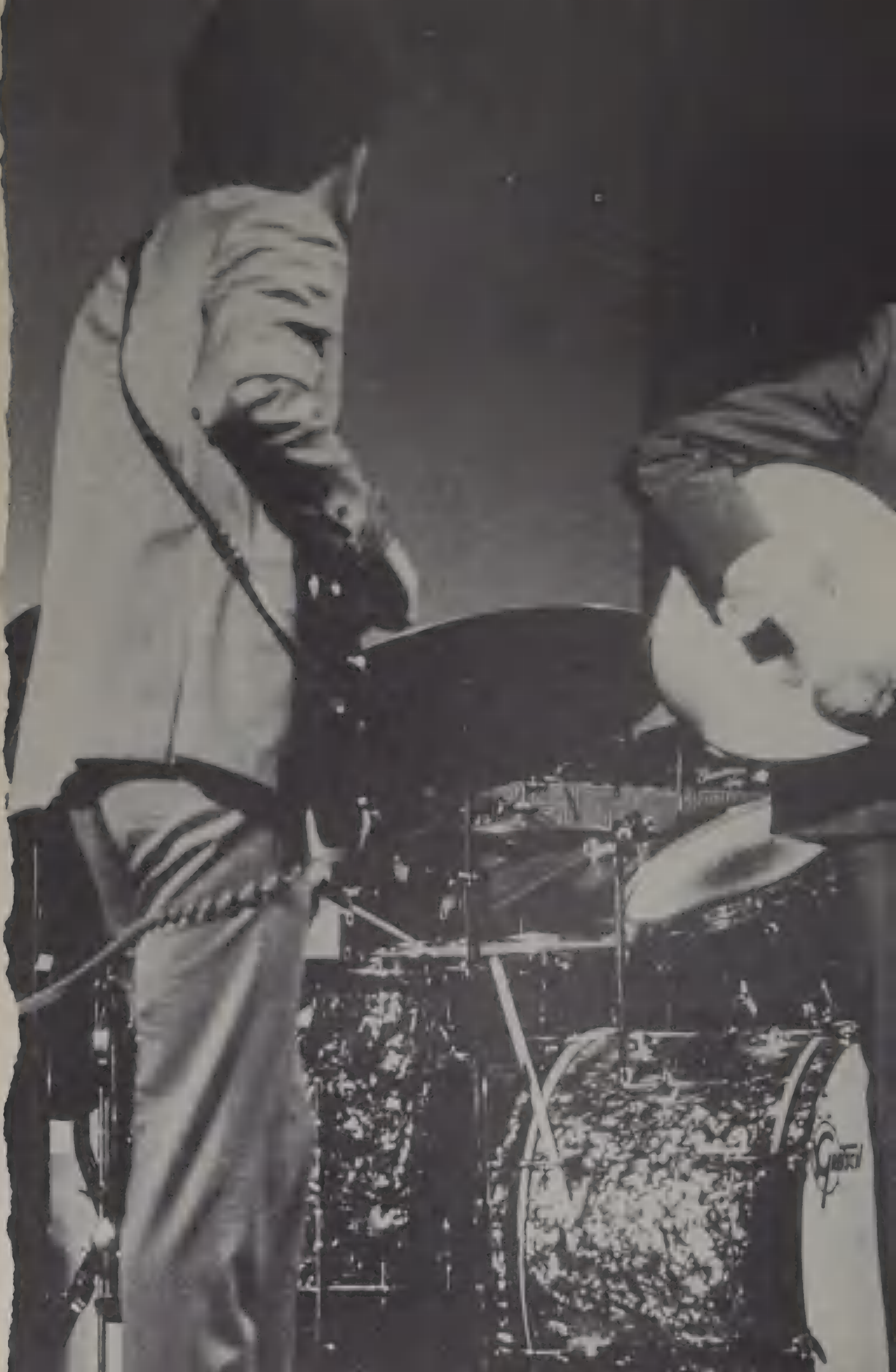
My being a Gemini explains a lot. It forces me to extremes. I'm never really balanced in the middle. I go from one side to the other without staying in either side place very long. I'm happy, sad, up, down, in, out, up in the sky and down in the depths of the earth. I can't tell you how Bob Dylan has lived his life. And it's far from over.

Malibu, September 1976.



AT THE WAILING WALL, JERUSALEM, 1971

ISLE OF WIGHT POP FESTIVAL, 1969 AND WITH SARAH AFTER THE FESTIVAL



DAWN, THE FIRST DAY OF ROLLING THUNDER REVIEW TOUR 1975

The Music.

Whatever happened to "Blind Boy Grunt"?

I was doing that four years ago. Now there's a lot of people writing songs on protest subjects. But it's taken some kind of a weird step. Hey, I'd rather listen to Jimmy Reed or Howlin' Wolf, man, or the Beatles, or Francois Hardy than I would listen to any protest song singers—although I haven't heard all the protest song singers there are. But the ones I've heard—there's this very emptiness which is like a song written 'Let's Hold Hands and Everything Will be Grand'. Just because somebody mentions the word "bomb" I'm not going to go "Aaa-eee!", man, and start clapping.

It's not that it don't work. It's that there are a lot of people afraid of the bomb, right. But there are a lot of other people who're afraid to be seen carrying a *Modern Screen* magazine down the street, you know. Lot of people afraid to admit that they like Marlon Brando movies . . . Hey, it's not that they don't work anymore but have you ever thought of a place where they *do* work? What exactly *does* work?

There's another attitude called for.

You have to be very hip to the fact about that attitude—you have to be hip to communication. Sure you can make all sorts of protest songs and put them on a Folkways record but who hears them? The people that do hear them are going to be agreeing with you anyway. You aren't going to get somebody to hear it who doesn't dig it? If you can find a cat that can actually say, "Okay, I'm a changed man because I heard this one thing—or, I just saw this one thing" . . . Hey it don't necessarily happen that way all the time. It happens with a collage of experience which somebody can actually know by instinct what's right and what's wrong for him to do.

A lot of people act out of guilt. They act because they think somebody's looking at them, no matter what it is. There's people who do anything because of guilt.

Los Angeles, September 1965.

Folk Music.

It aint no use talkin about folk music–
It aint no use takin stands an sides an getting all sweaty over it–
It don make sense really t learn names an shout labels and get yerself all confused–
It aint got no meanin at all t discuss an defend it–
An it don mean nothin t offend it–
Of all the corners a the question there aint no answers noplace worth lookin at seriously cause the question jus aint that almighty big–
What's folk music an what aint's got nothin t do with the world–
It just aint healthy t let the music run yer life like that–
Yer life's gotta run the music–
Yuh can't afford t let yer guitar own yer mind–
Yer mind's gotta own that guitar–
So what if others folks try an make rules for it–
So what if other folks try an boundary it all up–
So what if other folks try an chain it down an tell yuh what it's all about–
It don make no difference at all if yer own life is running things–
But if the music's runnin you then yuh get swallowed by all blabber talk–
Yuh don have t worry about what's folk music an what aint–
Man, it's just a wide circle a silly tongues an it aint important at all–

New York City, 1963.

I never introduced a song "Here's the song I've stole the melody from, someplace." For me it wasn't that important. Still isn't that important. I don't care about the melodies, man. The melodies are all traditional anyway, and if anybody wants to pick that out and say, "That's Bob Dylan" that's their thing, not mine. I mean, if they want to think that. Anybody with any sense at all man, he says that I haven't any hope . . . Hey I got *faith*. I know that there are people who are goin' to know that's total bullshit. I know the cat is just uptight. He hasn't really gotten into a good day and he has to pick on something. Groovy. He has to pick on me? Hey, if he can't pick on me, he picks on someone else. It don't matter. He doesn't step on me, 'cause I don't care. He's not coming up to me on the street and stepping on my head, man. Hey,

CBS RECORDING SESSION

LIBRARY

I've only done that with very few of my songs anyway. And then when I don't do it, everybody says they're rock 'n' roll melodies. You can't satisfy the people—you just can't. You got to know, man, they just don't care about it.

Los Angeles, September 1965.

I didn't go into folk music to make any money, but because it was easy, you could be by yourself, you didn't need anybody. All you needed was a guitar, you didn't need anybody else at all. I don't know what's happened to it now. I don't think it's as good as it used to be. Most of the folk music singers have gone on, they're doing other things. Although there are still a lot of good ones around.

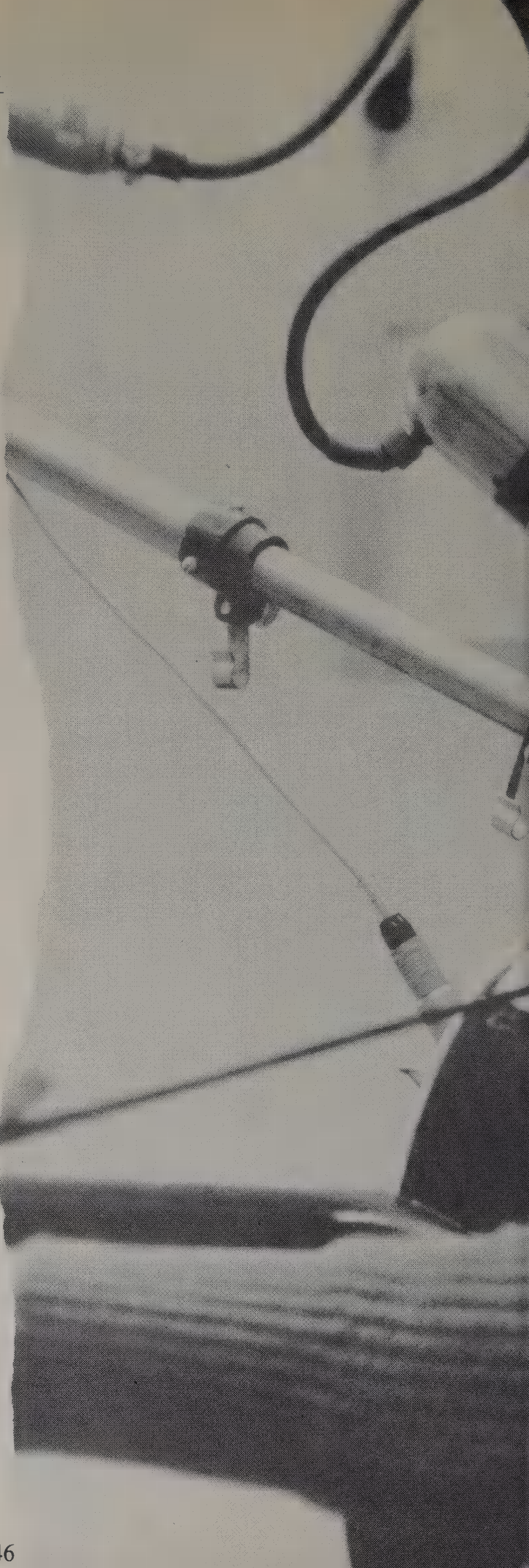
Chicago, November 1965.

I used to play rock and roll when I was a . . . hard silly rock and roll when I was fifteen, fourteen, and by the time I was seventeen you just couldn't make it anymore at all unless you wanted to be a sideman and live forever in carnivals or recording studios, so I just uh, I didn't, I couldn't make it that way and uh, I just played acoustic guitar and I discovered a thing called folk music. And I did that for a while and then I stopped doing that and started writing the songs myself and I always wanted accompaniment you know but I just couldn't afford it and I just put that out of my mind and now when it's happened I don't really think about it one way or the other. It's, I like it more this way.

Detroit, October 1965.

I became interested in folk music because I had to make it somehow. Obviously I'm not a hard-working cat. I played the guitar, that was all I did. I thought it was great music. Certainly I haven't turned my back on it or anything like that. There is—and I'm sure nobody realizes this, all the authorities who write about what it is and what it should be, when they say keep things simple, they should be easily understood—folk music is the only music where it isn't simple. It's never been simple. It's weird, man, full of legend, myth, Bible and ghosts. I've never written anything hard to understand, not in my head anyway, and nothing as far out as some of the old songs. They were out of sight: 'Little Brown Dog' "I bought a little brown dog, its face is all gray. Now I'm going to Turkey flying on my bottle." And 'Nottemun Town,' that's like a herd of ghosts passing through on the way to Tangiers. 'Lord Edward,' 'Barbara Allen,' they're full of myth.

New York City, July 1965.



FIRST CBS RECORDING SESSION, NOVEMBER 1961

Mister Dylan, how would you define folk music?

As a constitutional replay of mass-production.

Do you call your songs "folk-songs"?

No. No.

Are protest songs "folk-songs"?

I guess, if they're a constitutional replay of mass-production.

Do you prefer songs with a subtle or obvious message?

With a what?

A subtle or obvious message?

Uh. I don't really prefer those kinds of songs at all. *Message,* you mean like, what song with a message?

Well, 'Eve of Destruction' and things like that.

Do I prefer that to what?

I don't know, but your songs are supposed to have a subtle message.

Subtle message!?

Well they're supposed to! [*laughter*]

Where'd you hear that?

In a movie magazine.

Oh My God! [*laughter*], Oh my God. Well. We won't. We won't discuss these things here.

San Francisco, December 1965.

Anybody with any kind of knowledge at all would know by instinct what's happening here. Somebody who doesn't know that is still hung up with success and failure and good and bad . . . maybe he doesn't have a chick all the time . . . stuff like that. But I can't use comments, man. I don't take nothing like that seriously. If somebody praises me and says "How groovy you are", it doesn't mean anything to me because I can usually sense where that person's at. And it's no compliment if someone who's a total freak comes up and says "How groovy you are". And it's the same if they don't dig me. Other kinds of people don't HAVE to say anything because, when you come down to it, it's all what's happening in the moment which counts. Who cares about tomorrow and yesterday? People don't live there, they live now.

Los Angeles, September 1965.

Protest Songs.

The protest thing is old, and how valid is it anyway? Is it going to stop anything: is anybody going to listen? People think this helps . . . But songs aren't gonna save the world. It makes you feel like, if you don't like something, leave it alone . . . Then you got to make it from there. They can crush you and kill you. They can lay you at 42nd and Broadway and put the hoses on you and flush you in the sewers and put you on the subway and carry you out to Coney Island and bury you on the Ferris wheel!

Los Angeles, September 1965.

I don't write finger pointing songs because I think I can put the world to rights. I don't think I can. And I don't really care if I can or not.

I just write what I feel. If other people think it has a message it's up to them, but I'm not deliberately trying to put one across.

London, April 1965.

What are your feelings about this kind of involvement in political activities by singers?

I don't get what you want? You mean singers who are political?

Uh-huh.

Oh, it's fine, if they want to be political, then it's not going to hurt anybody.

Are you going to be?

Am I going to be?

Well I mean, many students are saying that you were far more political a few years ago.

Oh, in the songs you mean. Oh that's easily enough seen if you know what my history was in New York City, you could easily figure it out, you could see the reasons for a lot of that. It's not really political anyway. It was just another thing from free writing.

From what?

It was just another thing from free writing. You see I always wrote. I was on the east side. When I came to make money I just went over and sang folk songs or songs I wrote. Y' know so, it was two different things. My attraction was to writing and only lately in the past two years have I discovered that I could put them both together, that's all.

You haven't any intention of getting involved in protest politics.

No.

A la Joan Baez.

No, I got too many other things to do.

Bob, a lot of the people who are protesting on campus have called you the father of protest.

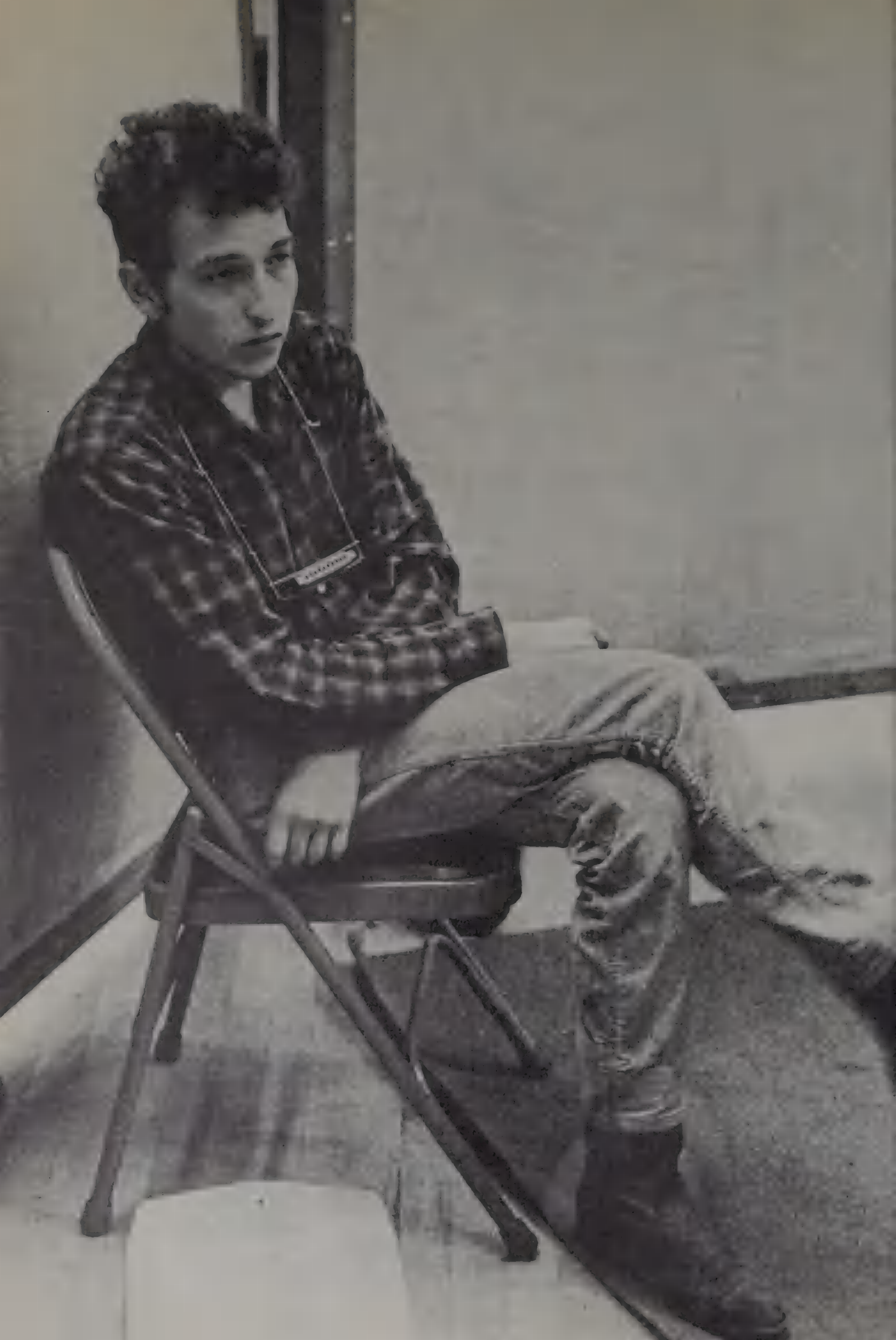
Well, ha, I guess I am.

Are you going to continue the protest movement in music now?

I don't, I don't, ah. Yes I'm prepared to as

NOVEMBER, 1962

IN CONCERT WITH JOAN BAEZ, 1965



well as anybody else, y'know what that means. I mean, you know, like what does it mean? Protest? What does it mean? Like what are they protesting about? What's protest? Where is protest? I mean people were protesting writing those kind of songs five years ago on the east coast. I mean, you know, everybody out there knows all about that. But uh, I don't know, I'm not really connected that . . . I'm not into what other people do that much, y'know.

Why do you think kids are listening to you now? Why do you think they want to hear what you have to say? Now.

I really don't know. I know, I just heard something a couple of days ago that amazed me, on this tape outside that concert I played in San Jose and there it is, this fifteen year old girl out there and she's being interviewed why she was there and she was fifteen years old and she knew of poets like William Blake and she knew his work, and she knew, she was hip to all kinds of different things which people are usually not acquainted with at the age, so maybe there's just a new kind of person, fifteen year old person, I don't know that. I do know that that person was more free in the mind than 22 year old college kids. I know that, and it's true. I'm only mentioning a specific case here.

Well, there's a greater maturity among the very young nowadays. Why is that?

I don't know, maturity, I didn't mean maturity. Maturity is not what I mean at all. Maturity is just a phoney word.

A special kind of maturity though. A special kind of attitude, is what you're saying.

Yeah, an attitude.

What is the attitude today among young people?

Oh God. I don't even know any young people. I don't really know.

Well when you said attitude, what could that be?

Well attitude. You have a certain attitude. I bet you have a certain attitude. Like you can be personally insulted can't you? All right, well there's an attitude among a certain crowd of people that can't be personally insulted. And they know, like were not thinking . . .

Is that how you feel?

Oh that's just one little thing I'm getting at. It's just a term. I'm not talking about how I feel. I'm telling you the truth. I mean, forget it comes from me! you know.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

Of the people who labour in the same musical field as you do, how many are protest singers, that is people who use the songs to protest the social state in which we live? Are there that many?

Yeah, you could say, 136.

You mean exactly 136?

Ah, well, it might be 132.

Can you name a few of 'em for me?

Protest? Uh . . . d'you just want singers?

Yeah! Give me their names. Who are they?

Well, um . . . I'll start . . .

How about Barry McGuire? Is he one?

No, no . . .

What is he?

Him, he's sort of like a mid-western and . . . [*unintelligible*] . . .provin' to everybody that McGuire was a protest singer that he had to have a protest singer really ah . . .

What does the word protest mean to you?

To me? Means uh . . . singing when I don't really wanna sing.

What?

It means singing against your wishes to sing.

Do you sing against your wishes to sing?

No, no.

Do you sing protest songs?

No.

What do you sing?

I sing love songs.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

Folk Rock.

Did you originate the term Folk-Rock?

Sure I did. I was just sitting around one day and I said "Folk Rock".

Are you a Folk music fan? Well, I'm sure you're aware of the magazine *Sing-Out*. It's a very respected well-to-do magazine in the music field and you better recognise who it is. You better realise right now, the organisation and the bosses behind that magazine – and the building in Wall Street, and the two-stage company. They invented that phrase "Folk Rock". They also invented the phrase "Folk Music".

It's what is known as a Jewish conspiracy.

You said it . . .

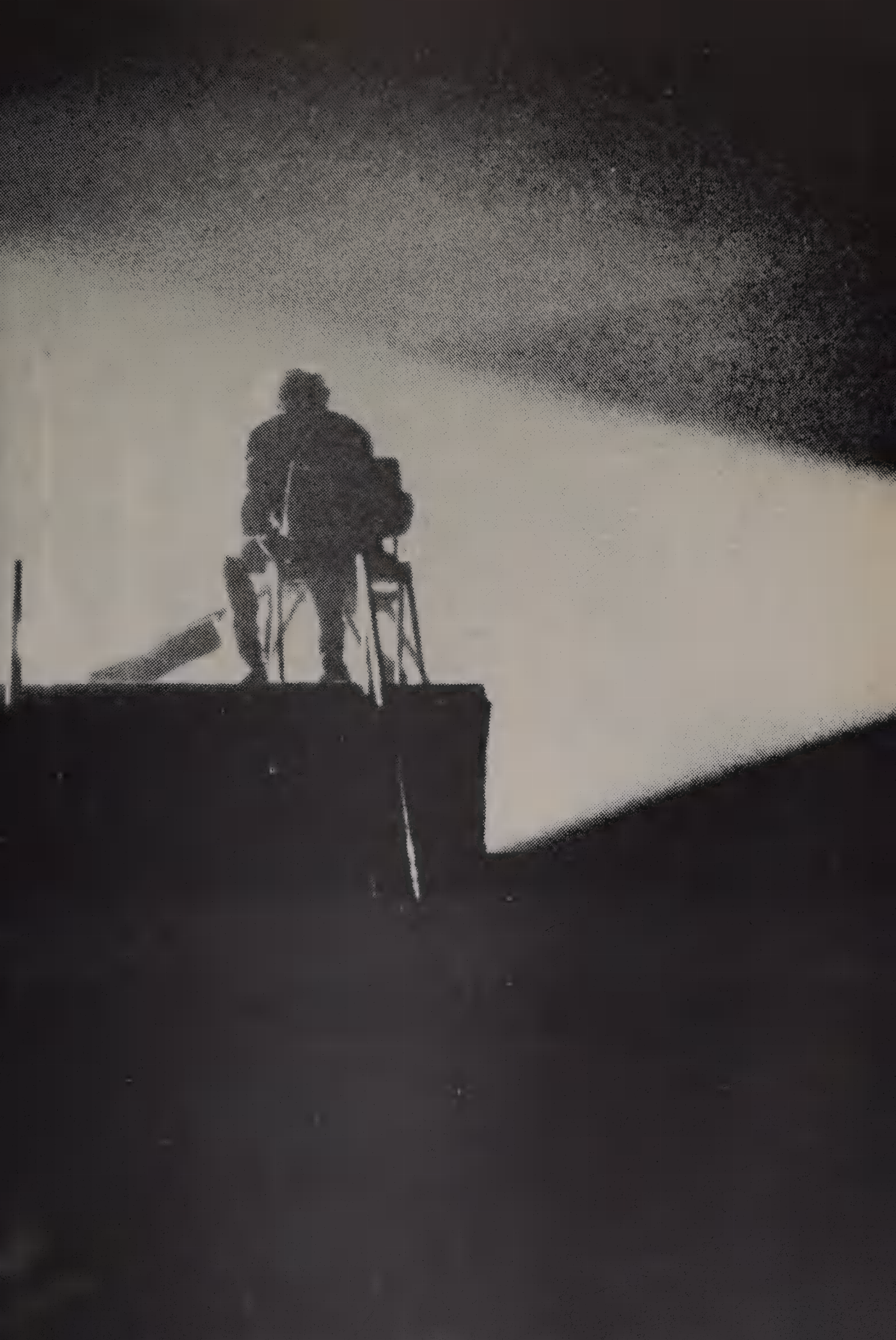
New York City, January 1966.

I don't play folk rock.

What would you call your music?

I'd call it, uh, I like to think of it more in terms of vision music. It's mathematical music.

Los Angeles, December 1965.



Who is it that you write and sing for?

Not writing and singing for anybody to tell you the truth. I don't care what people say. I don't care what they make me seem to be or what they tell other people I am. If I did care about that I'd tell you. I really have no concern with it. I don't ever come into contact with these people. Hey, I dig people though. But if someone's going to come up to me and ask me some questions which have been on his mind for a long time, all I can think of is, wow man, what else can be in that person's head besides me? Am I that important, man, to be in a person's head for such a long time he's got to know the answer? I mean, can that really straighten him out – if I tell him something? Hey, come *on* . . .

Los Angeles, September 1965.

Folk Music destroyed itself. Nobody destroyed it. Folk Music is still here, it's always going to be here, if you want to dig it. It's not that it's going in or out. It's all the soft mellow shit, man, that's just being replaced by something that people know is there now. Hey, you must've heard rock 'n'roll long before the Beatles? You must've discarded rock'n'roll around 1960. I did that in 1957. I couldn't make it as a rock'n'roll singer then. There were too many groups. I used to play piano. I made some records too.

Los Angeles, September 1965.

It's not folk rock, it's just instruments . . . it's not folk rock. I call it the mathematical sound, sort of Indian music. I can't really explain it.

Do you dislike folk-rock groups?

No, I like what everybody else does, what a lot of people do. I don't necessarily like the writing of too many songwriters, but I like the idea of, look, like they're trying to make it, you know, to say something about the death thing.

Actually I don't know many of them. I'm 24 now, and most of them playing and listening are teen-agers.

I was playing rock'n'roll when I was 13 and 14 and 15, but I had to quit when I was 16 or 17 because I couldn't make it that way, the image of the day was Frankie Avalon or Fabian, or this whole athletic supercleanness bit, you know, which if you didn't have that, you couldn't make any friends.

I played rock'n'roll when I was in my teens, yeah, I played semi-professionally, piano with rock'n'roll groups. About 1958 or 1959, I discovered Odetta, Harry Belafonte, that stuff, and I became a folk singer.

Chicago, November 1965.

Why did you give up the folk sound?

I've been on too many other streets to just do that. I couldn't go back and just do that. The real folk never seen 42nd Street, they've never ridden an airplane. They've got their little world, and that's fine.

Why have you begun using the electric guitar?

I don't use it that much, really.

Some people are hurt because you've used one at all.

That's their fault, it would be silly to say I'm sorry because I haven't really done anything. It's not really all that serious. I have a hunch the people who feel I betrayed them picked up on me a few years ago and weren't really back there with me at the beginning. Because I still see the people who were with me from the beginning once in a while, and they know what I'm doing.

Chicago, November 1965.

It's very complicated to play with electricity. You play with other people. You're dealing with other people. Most people don't like to work with other people, it's more difficult. It takes a lot. Most people who don't like rock and roll can't relate to other people.

New York City, July 1965.

Rock'n'Roll.

What made you decide to go the rock'n'roll route?

Carelessness. I lost my one true love. I start drinking. The first thing I know, I'm in a card game. Then I'm in a crap game. I wake up in a pool hall. Then this big Mexican lady drags me off the table, takes me to Philadelphia. She leaves me alone in her house, and it burns down. I wind up in Phoenix. I get a job as a Chinaman. I start working in a dime store, and move in with a 13-year-old girl. Then this big Mexican lady from Philadelphia comes in and burns the house down. I go down to Dallas. I get a job as a "before" in a Charles Atlas "before and after" ad. I move in with a delivery boy who can cook fantastic chili and hot dogs. Then this 13-year-old girl from Phoenix comes and burns the house down. The delivery boy – he ain't so mild. He gives her the knife, and the next thing I know I'm in Omaha. It's so cold there, by this time I'm robbing my own bicycles and frying my own fish. I stumble onto some luck and get a job as a carburettor out at the hot-rod races every Thursday night. I move in with a high school

THE WOODY GUTHRIE BENEFIT CONCERT, CARNEGIE HALL, 1968

Fender
Fender

ONSTAGE, 1965

teacher who also does a little plumbing on the side, who ain't much to look at, but who's built a special kind of refrigerator that can turn newspaper into lettuce. Everything's going good until that delivery boy shows up and tries to knife me. Needless to say, he burned the house down, and I hit the road. The first guy that picked me up asked me if I wanted to be a star. What could I say?

And that's how you became a rock'n'roll singer?

No, that's how I got tuberculosis.

New York City, January 1966.

I wonder if we could talk about electronic music and what made you decide to use it.

I was doing fine, you know, singing and playing my guitar. It was a sure thing, don't you understand, it was a sure thing. I was getting very bored with that. I couldn't go out and play like that. I was thinking of quitting. Out front it was a sure thing. I knew what the audience was gonna do, how they would react. It was very automatic. Your mind just drifts unless you can find some way to get in there and remain totally there. It's so much of a fight remaining totally there all by yourself. It takes too much. I'm not ready to cut that much out of my life. You can't have nobody around. You can't be bothered with anybody else's world. And I like people. What I'm doing now – it's a whole other thing. We're not playing rock music. It's not a hard sound. These people call it folk rock – if they want to call it that, something that simple, it's good for selling records. As far as it being what it is, I don't know what it is. I can't call it folk rock. It's a whole way of doing things. It has been picked up on. I've heard songs on the radio that have picked it up. I'm not talking about words. It's a certain feeling, and it's been on every single record I've ever made. That has not changed. I know it hasn't changed. As far as what I was totally, before, maybe I was pushing it a little then. I'm not pushing things now. I know very well how to do it. The problem of how I want to play something – I know it in front. I know it. I know what I'm going to say, what I'm going to do. I don't have to work it out. The band I work with – they wouldn't be playing with me if they didn't play like I want them to.

New York City, July 1965.

You couldn't make it livable back then with rock'n'roll, you couldn't carry around an amplifier and electric guitar and expect to survive, it was just too much of a hangup. It cost bread to make enough money to buy an electric guitar, and then you had to make more money to have enough people to play the music, you need two or three to create some conglomeration of sound. So it wasn't an alone kind of thing, you know. When you got other things dragging you down, you're sort of beginning to lose, crash, you know? When somebody's 16 or 25, who's got the right to lose, to wind up as a pinboy at 65?

By "making it" do you mean making commercial success?

No, no, that's not it, making money. It's being able to be nice and not hurt anybody.

How does your sound differ today?

It differs because it doesn't. I don't know, you see. I don't know exactly what to say rock'n'roll is. I do know that . . . think of it in terms of a whole thing. It's not just pretty words to a tune or putting tunes to words, there's nothing that's exploited. The words and the music, I can hear the sound of what I want to say.

Chicago, November 1965.

What we're doing now is, I know it's hard for most people to take, it's very frightening because it's a lot of stuff, it's uh, I know uh, lot a stuff is a, isn't even songs, or anything, they're just things that I've written under amusing circumstances and, written for no reason except to write it and I know, I know it's good you know. I know what it is, I know what's not good, I know what, what, what's deceiving in terms of poetry and all this kind of stuff.

Detroit, October 1965.

I can't really think that there is any rock'n'roll. Actually, when you think about it, anything that has no real existence is bound to become an international phenomenon. Anyway, what does it mean, rock'n'roll? Does it mean Beatles, does it mean John Lee Hooker, Bobby Vinton, Jerry Lewis' kid? What about Lawrence Welk? He must play a few rock'n'roll songs. Are all of these people the same? Is Ricky Nelson like Otis Redding? Is Mick Jagger really Ma Rainey? I can tell by the way people hold their cigarettes if they like Ricky Nelson. I think it's fine to like Ricky Nelson; I couldn't care *less* if somebody likes Ricky Nelson. But I think we're getting off the track here. There *isn't* any Ricky Nelson. There isn't any Beatles; oh, I take that back; there are a lot of beetles. But there isn't any Bobby Vinton. Anyway, the word is not "international phenomenon"; the word is "parental nightmare".

New York City, January 1966.

Writing & Performing.

Poetry.

Do you consider yourself a poet or a songwriter?

Uh, I don't consider myself either one of those two things. I did when I, first heard the words, you know. Of course, song writer, you hear that when you are very young. Poet, I never heard that word really, I never could really think of myself as a poet until I came to New York. And for a while I did think I was a poet but I don't consider myself anymore from seeing all the rest of the people who are called "poets" too and I just don't like to think of myself as a poet because it puts you in a category with a lot of funny people, you know.

When did you first find yourself writing poetry or verse or writing?

Oh, when I was about eight or nine. I've been writing for a very long time. I mean, if you can say. I mean I don't know if other, I don't know if most people write when they're eight, or eight or nine you know, but I actually did write poems at that age. Poems that rhymed, you know, for like the flowers and my mother and stuff like that. But, uh, so I've been writing for a while.

Canada, March 1966.

I can't define that word poetry. I wouldn't even attempt it. At one time I thought that Robert Frost was poetry, other times I thought Allen Ginsberg was poetry, sometimes I thought Francois Villon was poetry – but poetry isn't really confined to the printed page. Hey, then again I don't believe in saying, "Look at that girl walking. Isn't that poetry?" I'm not going to get insane about it. The lyrics to the songs . . . just so happens that it might be a little stranger than in most songs. I find it easy to write songs. I been writing songs for a long time and the words to the songs aren't written out for just the paper, they're written as you can read it, you dig? If you take whatever there is to the song away – the beat, the melody – I could still recite it. I see nothing wrong with songs you can't do that with either – songs that, if you took the beat and melody away, they wouldn't stand up. Because they're not supposed to do that, you know. Songs are songs . . . I don't believe in expecting too much out of any one thing.

Los Angeles, September 1965.

In the way of poetry who have you collected?

I haven't collected anybody. I get books sent to me by City Lights y'know, and some New York bookstores and I read those. I like a lot of the younger poets though.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

Do you write a good deal of poetry that is not thought of in musical terms?

Yes. Long long stuff y'know, which is in the book. But not really long stuff because long poems are, are in themself just like a whole thing to read y'know.

Is there any one poet that influenced you more than anyone else?

No.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

What poets do you dig?

Oh. Rimbaud, I guess. W. C. Fields. The Family . . . you know, the trapeze family in the circus? Smokey Robinson. Allen Ginsberg. Charlie Rich, he's a good poet.

San Francisco, December 1965.

Everybody has their own idea of what's a poet. Robert Frost, President Johnson, T. S. Elliot, Rudolf Valentino – they're all poets. I like to think of myself as the one who carried the light bulb.

London, May 1965.

Do you consider yourself primarily a poet?

No. We have our ideas about poets. It doesn't mean any more than the word "house." There are people who write *po*ems and people who write po*ems.* Other people write *poems.*

AT JACK KEROUAC'S GRAVE. LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS. 1975

Everybody who writes poems do you call them a poet? There's a certain kind of rhythm in some kind of way that's visible. You don't necessarily have to write to be a poet. Some people work in gas stations and they're poets. I don't call myself a poet because I don't like the word. I'm a trapeze artist.

New York City, October 1965.

Songs.

Bob, is it true that you dedicated your first song to Brigitte Bardot?

Yes, it's true.

Why? Why did you do that?

Why?

Are you a fan of Brigitte Bardot?

Yes, of course.

Why?

Why? [*laughter*] Do I have to answer that? I mean, you have to think for yourself a little bit.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

They come to me when I am most isolated in space and time. I reject a lot of inspiring lines. I kind of know myself well enough to know that the line might be good and it is the first line that gives you inspiration and then it's just like riding a bull. That is the rest of it. Either you just stick with it or you don't. And if you believe that what you are doing is important, then you will stick with it no matter what. A lot of lines that would be better off just staying on a printed page and finishing up as poems. I forget a lot of the lines. During the day, a lot of lines will come to me that I will just say are pretty strange and I don't have anything better to do. I try not to pay too much attention to those wild, obscure lines. I usually know the melody before the song.

Malibu, January 1978.

The songs are there. They exist by themselves, just waiting for someone to write them down. If I didn't do it, someone else would.

New York City, 1962.

It's all music; no more, no less. I know in my own mind what I'm doing. If anyone has imagination, he'll know what I'm doing. If they can't understand my songs they're missing something. If they can't understand green clocks, wet chairs, purple lamps or hostile statues, they're missing something too.

New York City, August 1965.

My songs're written with the kettledrums in mind, a touch of any anxious colour, unmentionable, obvious, and people perhaps like a soft Brazilian singer . . . I have given up at making any attempt at perfection. My poems are written in a rhythm of unpoetic distortion/ divided by pierced ears, false eyelashes/ subtracted by people constantly torturing each other, with a melodic purring line of descriptive hollowness – seen at times thru dark sunglasses and other forms of psychic explosion, a song is anything that can walk by itself/I am called a songwriter, a poem is a naked person . . . some people say I am a poet.

New York City, 1964.

You see, the songs are what I do . . . is write the songs and sing them and perform them. That's what I do. The performance part of it could end, but like I'm going to be writing these songs and singing them, and making records. And I see no end, right now. That's what I do . . .anything else interferes with it. I mean anything else trying to get on top of it, making something out of it which it isn't, it just brings me down. And it's not, uh . . .it just makes it seem all very cheap.

Well, it made me feel like you're almost doing a kind of penance of silence here . . .

No. No.

The first half.

I'm not one of those kind of people at all.

You don't need silence?

No, no silence. It's always silence where I am.

San Francisco, December 1965.

Sometimes I go for about two weeks without making up a song . . . Well, the songs I sing, I might go two weeks without writing a song, I write a lot of stuff, in fact I wrote a couple of songs last night . . . but I gave all the papers away, it was in a place called Bitter End, someone stood up to see what was happening on the stage, I've never seen anybody play, there was just myself and some other people, and they asked me to write a song about that, and I did it, but I don't sit around with the newspapers like a lot of people do, with a lot of newspapers spread around, and pick something out to write a song about, it's usually in my head before I start, that's the way I write . . . I don't even consider writing songs, I don't even consider I wrote it when it got done, I just think I made it up or I got it someplace, the song was there before me, before I came along, I just sort of came along and put it down with a pencil, it was there before I came around, that's the way I feel about it.

New York City, May 1962.

What particular song would you say you remember as being a breakthrough for you? Was it 'Blowing In the Wind'?

No, it was, uh . . . d'you mean the most honest and straight thing which I thought I ever put across? That reached popularity y'mean? There's been a few. 'Blowing In The Wind' was to a degree but I was just a kid, you know, I mean I didn't know anything about anything at that point. I just wrote that y'know and did a, that wasn't it really.

Ah, 'Mr Tambourine Man' uh, I was very close to that song. I kept it off my third album just because I felt too close to it to put it on, you know, that was.

But if you're talking about what breakthrough is for me I'll have to say, speaking totally would be 'Like A Rolling Stone' because that was uh, I wrote that after I, after I'd quit. I'd literally quit singing and playing and I found myself writing this song, this story, this long piece of vomit, about twenty pages long, and out of it I took 'Like A Rolling Stone' and it made it as a single and I'd never written anything like that before and it suddenly came to me that that was what I should do.

I mean, nobody had ever done that before, a lot of people, anybody can write, you know, on a lot of the things I used to write. I just wrote 'em first because nobody else could think of writing them, y'know, but that's only because I was hungry.

So, but nobody can, I haven't met anybody or heard anything, and I hear a lot, and, I mean I'm not saying it's better'n anything else, I'm saying like that I don't think, I mean I think 'Like A Rolling Stone' was definitely the thing which I do, and that's write songs. I don't like to, I'm not interested anymore now, after writing that I wasn't interested in writing a novel or a play or anything like I knew, I just had too much, I wanted to write songs you know? Because it was just a whole new category. I mean, nobody's ever really written songs, you know, before really. I mean people have you know in the older days, but those were sonnets and soft troubadour type things.

Canada, Spring 1966.

Songwriting.

Well, see, there was this song I was writing once. I put all the words down in their correct order on the paper then I tore it in four.

Then I rearranged the quarters to see if I got a better song out of the jumble.

I guess the rhyming didn't work out right. But it was pretty wild wondering if I was going to get a song out of it.

London, May 1965.

How do you do it? Do you play on the piano first? Or write the music down first or the lyrics, what do you do?

Naw, I just sit down and the next thing I know it's there.

How does it come there?

How does it come there? Um. Uh. I just sit and I write and the next thing I know it's there.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

What about the influence as a lyric writer, or a poet? They have mentioned the, uh, influence of Guthrie. But I don't hear the influence.

No. No. That was more or less a romantic James Dean kind of thing. But I don't know what influences. You know I would read somebody or listen to somebody because I would dig them. That would be the only reason I would you know.

Who have you collected on records over the past 10 years?

Uh. That I personally like? Oh, Lotte Lenia, Ma Rainey, all those sort of people. Modern singers, uh, Sir Douglas Quintet, The Staple Singers, some of the French singers . . .

Los Angeles, December, 1965.

Bob. You said you always do your words first and think of it as music. When you do the words, can you hear it? Can you hear what music you want when you do the words?

Yes. Oh, yes.

Do you hear any music before you have the words. Do you have any songs that you don't have words to yet?

Sometimes, on very general instruments. Not on the guitar though. Maybe something like the harpsichord or the harmonica or the autoharp. I might hear some kind of melody or tune which I would know the words to put to. Not with the guitar though. The guitar is too hard an instrument. I don't really hear many melodies based on the guitar.

Do you sit down just to write a song or do you write it on inspiration?

I more or less write it on a lot of things. [*laughter*].

Would you say that the words are more important than the music?

The words are just as important as the

music. There would be no music without the words.

Which do you do first ordinarily?

The words.

San Francisco, December 1965.

How do you work?

Most of the time I work at night. I don't like to think of it as work. I don't know how important it is. It's not important to the average cat who works eight hours a day. What does he care? The world can get along very well without it. I'm hip to that.

New York City, July 1965.

It's like this painter who lives around here – he paints the area in a radius of twenty miles, he paints bright strong pictures. He might take a barn from twenty miles away, and hook it up with a brook right next door, then with a car ten miles away, and with the sky on some certain day, and the light on the trees from another certain day. A person passing by will be painted alongside someone ten miles away. And in the end he'll have this composite picture of something which you can't say exists in his mind. It's not that he started off wilfully painting this picture from all his experience . . . That's more or less what I do.

Woodstock, November 1968.

Almost anything else is easy except writing songs. The hardest part is when the inspiration dies along the way. Then you spend all your time trying to recapture it. I don't write every day. I'd like to but I can't. You're talking to a total misfit. Gershwin, Bacharach – those people – they've got song-writing down. I don't really care if I write. I can say that now, but as soon as the light changes, it'll be the thing I care about most. When I'm through performing, I'll still be writing, probably for other people.

Malibu, September 1976.

Do you have to get in a certain type of mood to write your music?

Yeah, I guess so. A certain type of mood, if you want to call it that.

Do you find that you are perhaps more creative at a certain time of the day?

Yes, yes, I feel that way.

Like a night writer?

I would say night has nothing to do with it, no.

Do you find that when you are writing that you free associate often?

No, it's all very clear and simple to me. These songs aren't complicated to me at all. I know what they all are all about! There's nothing hard to figure out for me. I wouldn't write anything I can't really see.

I don't mean it that way. I mean when you're creating a song, are you doing it on a subliminal level, where you're letting your mind just slow, where you are very conscious of each step, each word . . .

No.That's the difference in the songs I write now. In the past year or so . . . in the last year and a half, maybe two, I don't know . . . but the songs before, up till one of these records, I wrote the fourth record in Greece so there was a change there, but the records before that, I used to know what I wanted to say, before I used to write the song. All the stuff which I had written before which wasn't song, was just on a piece of toilet paper when it comes out like that. It's the kind of stuff I never would sing because people would just not be ready for it. But I just went through that other thing of writing songs and I couldn't write like it anymore. It was just too easy and it wasn't really *right.* I would start out, I would know what I wanted to say before I wrote the song and I would say it, you know, and it would never come out exactly the way I thought it would, but it came out, you know, it touched it, but now I just write a song, like *I know* that it's just going to be all right and I don't really know exactly what it's all about, but I do know the minutes and the layers of what it's all about.

What did you think about your song 'It's Allright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding'? It happens to be my favourite one.

God bless you son. I haven't heard it for a long time. I couldn't even sing it for you probably.

How long does it take you to write a . . .

It's usually not too long a time really. I might write all night and get one song out of a lot of different things I write.

San Francisco, December 1965.

Is there anything in addition to your songs that you want to say to people?

Good luck!

You don't say that in your songs.

Oh yes, I do, every song tails off with "Good luck, I hope you make it."

San Francisco, December 1965.

No . . .I don't know really how much longer I'll be playing and singing on a stage. I don't really

RECORDING SESSION, JUNE 1965

plan to do it for the rest of my life or anything, uh, you can find all these people that play music on the stage definitely have some kind of image which people come there to see you do, whether it be, you know, Lawrence Welk or Steve McQueen or you know, Howdie Doodie or President Johnson, you know, they all expect something. And usually they get what they expect, you know, and what they paid for. I never promised anything, you know, uh, I used to get up, I used to get up on the stage when I first began playing concerts and I didn't even know what I was going to do, I just used to walk in from the street in my clothes you know and then anything could happen. I used to talk sometimes for 20 minutes but now, now it's different, now I want to play the songs because I actually dig them myself. Whereas I was doing a lot of stuff before which I didn't really dig because I had written them so fast and under such very weird strange circumstances that motivated things you know, stuff which had reasons to be written which anybody worth anything could really see through, which I could see through, and higher up people couldn't see through, but just wouldn't let on because it was a thing to play a game with. So a lot of people played games with me and called me weird names because I wrote songs like "With God On Your Side" but uh, but what it really meant to write something like that and sing it on the stage has never been brought out or expressed. I've never seen it written anywhere, uh.

Detroit, October 1965.

What kind of a singer are you?

Oh, a mathematical singer. I use words like most people use numbers. That's about the best I can do . . .

Can you elaborate a little bit more on that, you're losing me again?

Oh, I'd hate to do that! I can't elaborate on it any more than that. I could at another time. You've really got me at a bad moment.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

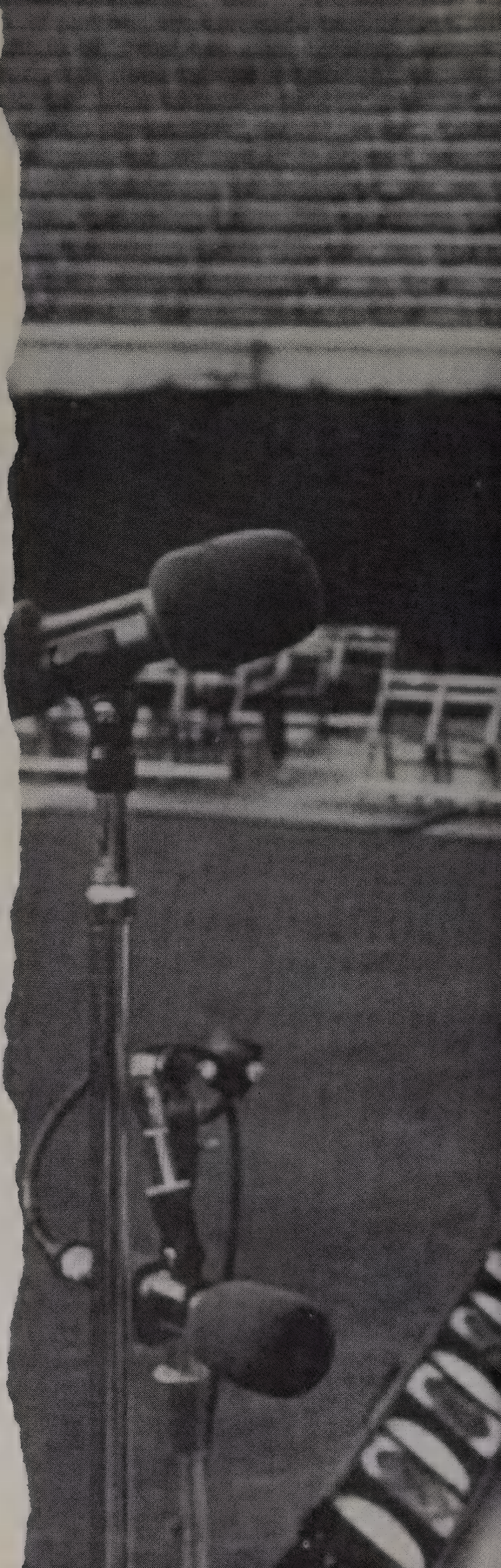
I play rag rock. It's a special brand of music that I play. I'll be writing some new songs soon, and then, look out! The music will be up to a whole new level.

Malibu, September 1976.

Performing.

Bob, you sing mostly love songs. Is love important to you when you write the things?

No.



FOREST HILL STADIUM, NEW YORK CITY, 1965

Is it important to you when you sing the songs?

No.

Do you enjoy performing your own lyrics?

Well, I perform the songs the same way as. . . you know, I just perform the songs.

I mean do you enjoy performing?

I like to sing and play, yeah.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

Do you think of yourself primarily as a singer or as a poet?

Oh, I think of myself more as a song and dance man, y'know.

A what?

Song and Dance man.

Why?

Oh, I don't think we have enough time to really go into that.

San Francisco, December 1965.

You say you no longer sing your older songs. Do you consider them less valid than the ones *you're putting out now?*

No, I just consider them something else to themselves, y'know, for another time, another dimension. It would be kind of dishonest for me to sing them now because I wouldn't really *feel* like singing them.

San Francisco, December 1965.

Sometimes you get people rushing to the stage but you just, you know . . . turn 'em off very fast. Kick 'em in the head or something like that. They get the picture.

San Francisco, December 1965.

Are you ever nervous on stage?

Not nervous. Thoughtful. If I appeared nervous or tense, that was because I was kinda inhibited, y'know – standing there listening to everything I was doing. And I don't like to do that much.

It's different, what you hear on stage and what the audience hears. And – well, I was very glad they clapped! I'd like to thank them all individually.

London, May 1965.

Over the past seven or eight years, did you miss being on stage?

Sure. There's always those butterflies at a certain point, but then there's the realization that the songs I'm singing mean as much to the people as to me, so it's just up to me to perform the best I can.

Montreal, January 1974.

I'm not interested in myself as a performer. Performers are people who perform for other people. Unlike actors, I know what I'm saying. It's very simple in my mind. It doesn't matter what kind of audience reaction this whole thing gets. What happens on the stage is straight. It doesn't expect any rewards or fines from any kind of outside agitators. It's ultra-simple, and would exist whether anybody was looking or not.

As far as folk and folk-rock are concerned, it don't matter what kind of nasty names people invent for the music. It could be called arsenic music, or perhaps Phaedra music. I don't think that such a word as folk-rock has anything to do with it. And folk rock music is a word I can't use. Folk music is a bunch of fat people. I have to think of all this as traditional music. Traditional music is based on hexagrams. It comes about from legends, Bibles, plagues, and it revolves around vegetables and death. There's nobody that's going to kill traditional music. All these songs about roses growing out of people's brains and lovers who are really geese and swans that turn into angels – they're not going to die. It's all those paranoid people who think that someone's going to come and take away their toilet paper – *they're* going to die. Songs like 'Which Side Are You On?' and 'I Love You, Porgy' – they're not folk-music songs; they're political songs. They're *already* dead. Obviously, death is not very universally accepted. I mean, you'd think that the traditional music people could gather from their songs that mystery is a fact, a traditional fact. I listen to the old ballads; but I wouldn't go to a *party* and listen to the old ballads. I could give you descriptive detail of what they do to me, but some people would probably think my imagination had gone mad. It strikes me funny that people actually have the gall to think that I have some kind of fantastic imagination. It gets very lonesome. But anyway, traditional music is too unreal to die. It doesn't need to be protected. Nobody's going to hurt it. In that music is the only true, valid death you can feel today off a record player. But like anything else in great demand, people try to own it. It has to do with a purity thing. I think its meaninglessness is holy. Everybody knows that I'm not a folk singer.

New York City, January 1966.

The Message.

Mister Dylan, I know you dislike labels and probably rightfully so, but for those of us who are well over thirty, could you label yourself and perhaps tell us what your role is?

Well I'd sort of label myself as "well under thirty". And my role is to, y'know, just stay here as long as I can.

San Francisco, December 1965.

Do you think that there is among the audience a number of people who are going to be actually changed by listening to the material you've done?

No. No. I don't think anybody's gonna be actually changed from something to something else, I don't think that's possible at all. It might hit them very hard maybe or very, it might hit them very negatively or positively. They might get a weird reaction or something but it will only last until the concert's over and maybe, if it's, maybe ten minutes after on the way home when they talk about it or something but, it certainly can't change everybody's way of thinking you

WOODSTOCK 1966

know because uh, everybody lives by themselves, you know. All these people that come to the concerts they have to go home, you know, after the concert.

Do you think that to them, that you affect the people who are ready to identify with the material that you are doing anyway?

Ah, yeah. I'll tell you, it's more like I've only played one place so far where I can, where I know I had this very powerful feeling and that was in Dallas Texas, you know, and Austin Texas, we played concerts down there and we played uh, 'Tom Thumb's Blues', uh, don't know if you're acquainted with it or not, anyway they knew the feeling what it was all about you know? And they clapped after every verse and then they went wild, you know, they really knew, they didn't know exactly maybe what it was all about, but they knew the feeling of it being very close to, you know, Mexican colour and everything down there you know, and it's the way things feel. But I, ah, we've played this music all over, you know, but I don't and uh, see, it's funny you know, it's just, I have no idea because we can't see the audience but I know that some people go through a lot of changes and other people, other people just know. I know a lot of people just know, you know what, they just know and that's about all there is to it.

Detroit, October 1965.

I'm sure you must have been asked a thousand times, what are you trying to say in your music? I don't understand one of the songs.

Yeah. Well, you shouldn't feel offended or anything, you know. It's not, you know, it's not, I'm sorry, I'm not trying to say anything to you! You know. Like if you don't get it, you don't have to really think about it because it's not addressed to you!

Who are you addressing your songs to?

It's not addressed to anybody.

Are you trying to say something when you write or are you just entertaining?

I'm just an entertainer, that's all.

You just take a couple'a songs . . .

No. No. I can't try to tell you about it, obviously I just can't try to tell you about it.

Do you really feel whatever it is that you write?

Now you're making me mad now, huh? you really think . . . Huh?

Do you really feel the things that you write and say?

What's there to feel, name me something?

Oh, I'm getting out of here.

Well tell me something! He probably doesn't remember the song.

Well did you feel aimlessly drunk when you wrote that?

Did I feel it? Well I guess so. I must have felt it. Hahah.

Well I think we're talking about . . .

We're talking about two different things.

We're talking about standard emotions. We're talking about pain, remorse and love.

Oh yes, I have none of those feelings. No. I have none of those feelings at all.

What sort of feelings do you have when you write a song?

They're in the songs, I mean they're there. I'm showing you my feelings, I mean, you know . . . They're in the songs. I don't have to explain my feelings. I'm not on trial. [*laughter*]

Los Angeles, December 1965.

There are so many lies that have been told, so many things that are kept back. Kids have a feeling like me, but they ain't hearing it no place. They're scared to step out. But I ain't scared to do it, man!

New York City, 1962.

What is your message.

Keep a good head and always carry a light bulb.

London, May 1965.

All I can hope to do is sing what I'm thinking, and maybe remind you of something. Don't put me down as a man with a message.

My songs are just me talking to myself. Maybe that's an egotistical thing to say, but that's what it is.

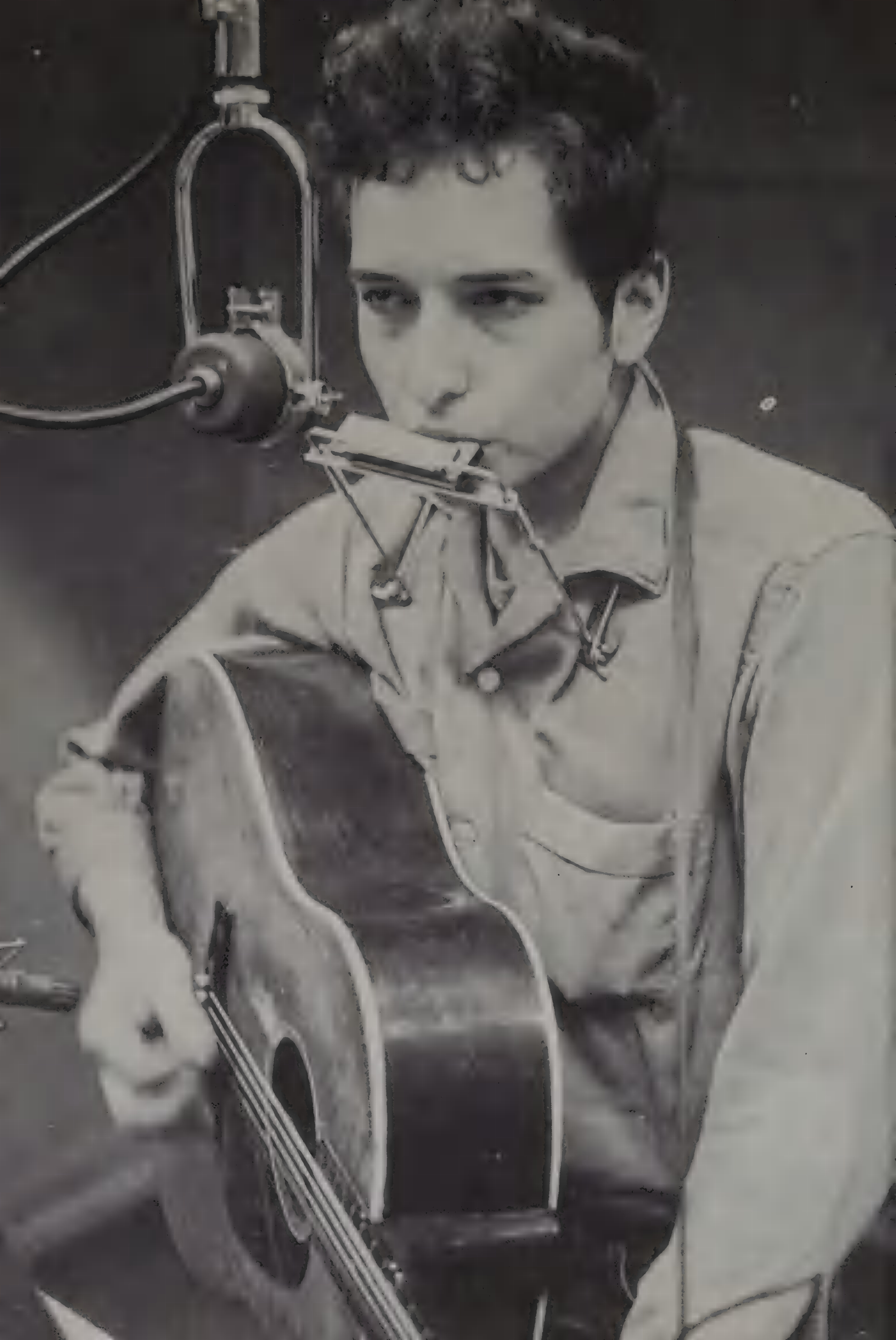
I have no responsibility to anybody except myself. If people like me—fine. If they don't then maybe I'll do something else.

Songs are just pictures of what I'm seeing – glimpses of things—life, maybe, as it's going on around. They're not confined to words you hear.

They are scattered between different things, and the lead for the listener will lie in the title of the song.

Y'know, every one of my songs could be written better. This used to bother me, but it doesn't any more. There's nothing perfect anywhere, so I shouldn't expect myself to be perfect.

London, April 1965.



The Albums.

So if I started with album one, side one, band one, I could truthfully watch Bob Dylan grow?

No, you could watch Bob Dylan laughing to himself. Or you could see Bob Dylan going through changes. That's really the most.

Los Angeles, September 1965.

Bob Dylan.

There was a violent, angry emotion running through me then. I just played the guitar and harmonica and sang those songs and that was it. Mr. Hammond asked me if I wanted to sing any of them over again and I said no. I can't see myself singing the same song twice in a row. That's terrible.

New York City, 1963.

Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.

I felt real good about doing an album with my own material. My own material and I picked a little on it. Picked the guitar, and it was a *big* Gibson. I felt real accomplished on that. 'Don't Think Twice', got a chance to do some of that. Got a chance to play in open tuning . . . 'Oxford Town', I believe that's on that album. That's open tuning. I got a chance to do talking blues. I got a chance to do ballads like 'Girl From The North Country'. It's just because it had more variety. I felt good at that.

New York, October 1969.

The Times They Are A-Changin'.

Those songs were all written in the New York atmosphere. I'd never have written any of them—or sung them the way I did—if I hadn't been sitting around listening to performers in New York cafés and the talk in all the dingy parlours. When I got to New York it was obvious that something was going on—folk music—and I did my best to learn and play it. I was just there at the right time with pen in hand. I suppose there was some ambition in what I did. But I tried to make the songs genuine.

Date and source unknown.

Another Side Of Bob Dylan.

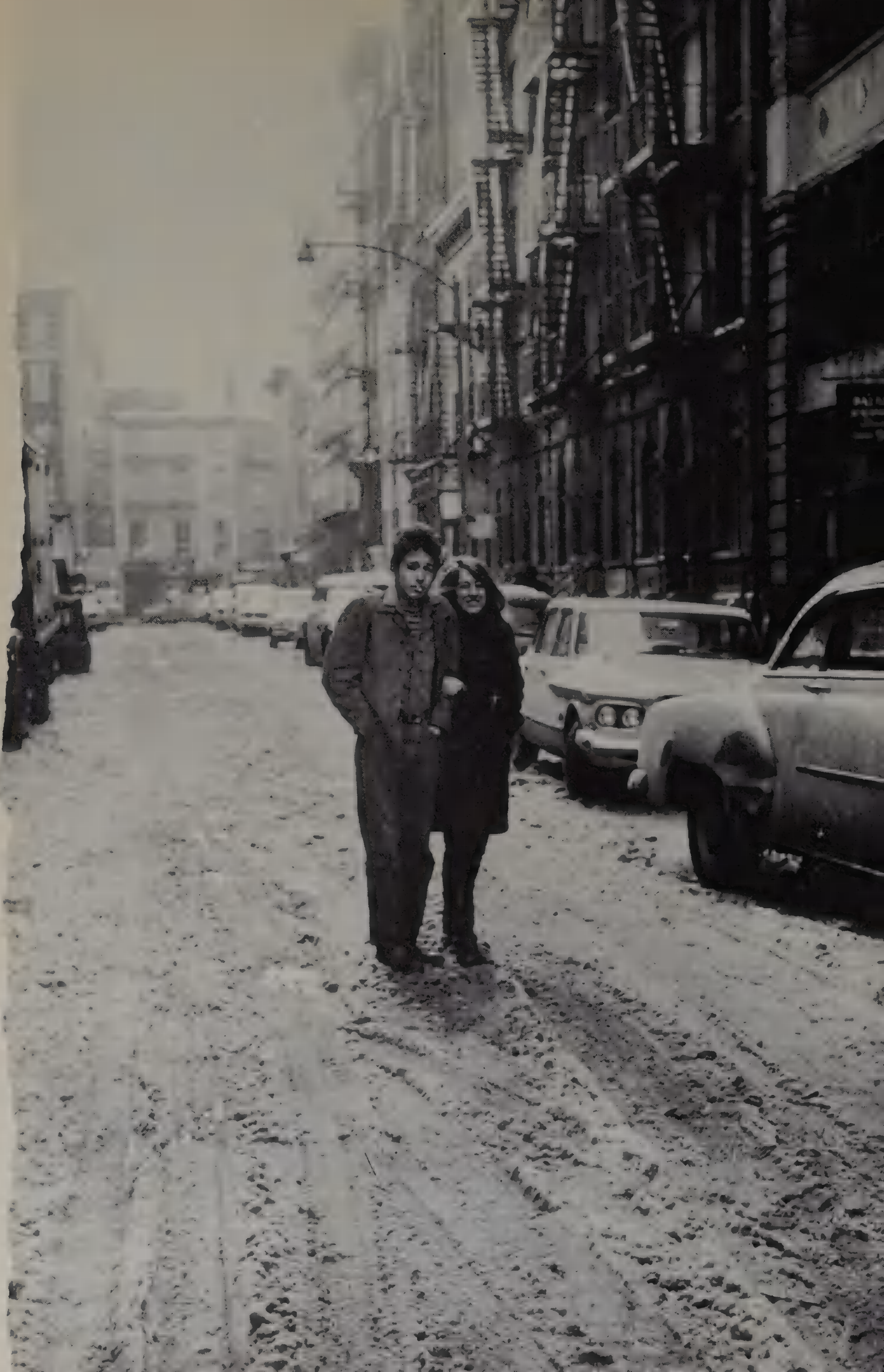
There aren't any finger-pointing songs in here, either. Those records I've made, I'll stand behind them, but some of that was jumping into the scene to be heard and a lot of it was because I didn't see anybody else doing that kind of thing. Now a lot of people are doing finger-pointing songs. You know—pointing to all the things that are wrong. Me, I don't want to write *for* people anymore. You know—be a spokesman. Like I once wrote about Emmett Till in the first person, pretending I was him. From now on, I want to write from inside me, and to do that I'm going to have to get back to writing like I used to when I was ten—having everything come out naturally. The way I like to write is for it to come out the way I walk or talk. Not that I even walk or talk yet like I'd like to. I don't carry myself yet the way Woody, Big Joe Williams, and Lightnin' Hopkins have carried themselves. I hope to someday, but they're older.They got to where music was a tool for them, a way to live more, a way to make themselves feel better. Sometimes I can make myself feel better with music, but other times it's still hard to go to sleep at night.

It's hard being free in a song—getting it all in. Songs are so confining. Woody Guthrie told me once that songs don't have to do anything like that. But it's not true. A song has to have some kind of form to fit into the music. You can bend the words and the metre, but it still has to fit somehow. I've been getting freer in the songs I write, but I still feel confined. That's why I write a lot of poetry—if that's the word. Poetry can make its own form.

New York City, 1966.

The songs are insanely honest, not meanin to twist any heads an written only for the reason that I myself me alone wanted and needed to

RECORDING SESSION, NOVEMBER 1962



WITH SUZE ROTOLO, 'FREEWHEELIN'' COVER SESSION, NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 1963

write them. I've conceded the fact there is no understanding of anything, at best, just winks of the eye and that is all I'm lookin for now I guess.

New York City, 1966.

Blonde On Blonde.

In *Blonde on Blonde* I wrote out all the songs in the studio. The musicians played cards, I wrote out a song, we'd do it, they'd go back to their game and I'd write out another song.

New York City, January 1968.

I was going at a tremendous speed . . . at the time of my *Blonde on Blonde* album, I was going at a tremendous speed.

New York City, October 1969.

I always hear other instruments, how they should sound. The closest I ever got to the sound I hear in my mind was on individual bands in the *Blonde on Blonde* album. It's that thin, that wild mercury sound. It's metallic and bright gold, with whatever that conjures up. That's my particular sound. I haven't been able to succeed in getting it all the time. Mostly, I've been driving at a combination of guitar, harmonica and organ, but now I find myself going into territory that has more percussion in it and rhythms of the soul.

It was in 'I Want You'. It was in a lot of that stuff. It was in the album before that, too, *Highway 61 Revisited.* Also in *Bringing It All Back Home.* That's the sound I've always heard. Later on, the songs got more defined, but it didn't necessarily bring more power to them. The sound was whatever happened to be available at the time. I have to get back to the sound that will bring it all through me.

Malibu, January 1978.

John Wesley Harding.

I called it that because I had that song, 'John Wesley Harding.' It didn't mean anything to me. I called it that, 'cause I had the song 'John Wesley Harding,' which started out to be a long ballad. I was gonna write a ballad on . . . like maybe one of those old cowboy . . . you know, a real long ballad. But in the middle of the second verse, I got tired. I had a tune, and I didn't want to waste the tune, it was a nice little melody, so I just wrote a quick third verse, and I recorded that.

But it was a silly little song [*laughs*] . . . I mean, it's not a commercial song, in any kind of sense. At least, *I* don't think it is. It was the one song on the album which didn't seem to fit in. And I had it placed here and there, and I didn't know what I was gonna call the album anyway. No one else had any ideas either. I placed it last and I placed it in the middle somewhere, but it didn't seem to work. So somehow that idea came up to just put it first and get done with it right away, and that way when it comes up, no one'll . . .you know, if someone's listening to 'All Along the Watchtower' and that comes up, and they'll say, "Wow, what's that?" [*laughs*]

I knew people were gonna be brought down when they heard that, and say "Wow, what's that?" You know a lot of people said that to me, but I knew it in front. I knew people were gonna listen to that song and say that they didn't understand what was going on, but they would've singled that song out later, if we hadn't called the album *John Wesley Harding* and placed so much importance on that, for people to start wondering about it . . . if that hadn't been done, that song would've come up and people would have said it was a throw-away song. You know, and it would have probably got in the way of some other songs.

I heard the sound that Gordon Lightfoot was getting, with Charlie McCoy and Kenny Buttrey, I'd used Charlie and Kenny both before, and I figured if he could get that sound, I could. But we couldn't get it. [*laughs*] It was an attempt to get it, but it didn't come off. We got a different sound . . . I don't know what you'd call that . . .it's a muffled sound.

There used to be a lot of friction in the control booth, on these records I used to make. I didn't know about it, I wasn't aware of them until recently. Somebody would want to put limiters on this and somebody would want to put an echo on that, someone else would have some other idea. And myself, I don't know anything about any of this. So I just have to leave it up in the air. In someone else's hands.

There were three sessions: September, October and December, so it's not even a year old. I know that the concepts are imbedded now, whereas before that record I was just trying to see all of which I could do, trying to structure this and that. Every record was more or less for impact. Why, I did one song on a whole side of an album! It could happen to anybody. One just doesn't think of those things though, when one sees that other things can be done. It was spontaneously brought out, all those seven record albums. It was generously done, the

RECORDING SESSION, WITH MIKE BLOMFIELD, JANUARY 1965 material was all there. Now, I like to think that I can do it better, on my own terms, and I'll do whatever it is I can do. I used to slight it off all the time. I used to get a good phrase or a verse, and then have to carry it to write something off the top of the head and stick it in the middle, to lead this into that. Now as I hear all the old material that was done, I can see the whole thing. I can't see how to perfect it, but I can see what I've done. Now I can go from line to line, whereas yesterday it was from thought to thought. Then of course, there are times you just pick up an instrument—something will come, like a tune or some kind of wild line will come into your head and you'll develop that. If it's a tune on the piano or guitar—you'll just uuuuuhhhh [*hum*] whatever it brings out in the voice, you'll write those words down. And they might not mean anything to you at all, and you just go on, and that will be what happens. Now I don't do that any more. If I do it, I just keep it for myself. So I have a big lineup of songs which I'll never use. On the new record, it's more concise. Here I am not interested in taking up that much of anybody's time.

I haven't fulfilled the balladeer's job. A balladeer can sit down and sing three ballads for an hour and a half. See, on the album, you have to think about it after you hear it, that's what takes up the time, but with a ballad, you don't necessarily have to think about it after you hear it, it can all unfold to you. These melodies on the *John Wesley Harding* album lack this traditional sense of time. As with the third verse of the 'Wicked Messenger,' which opens it up, and then the time schedule takes a jump and soon the song becomes wider. One realizes that when one hears it, but one might have to adapt to it. But we are not hearing anything that isn't there; anything we can imagine is really there. The same thing is true of the song 'All Along the Watchtower,' which opens up a slightly different way, in a stranger way, for here we have the cycle of events working in a rather reverse order.

New York City, October 1969.

It's just development. We're always changing. You use new imagination and you get a new look.

New York City, January 1968.

A song is moral just by being a song. We're all moralists. We all believe the same things in the same places.

New York City, January 1968.

WITH BETTE MIDLER, 1975

'SELF PORTRAIT' RECORDING SESSION, WITH DOUG KERSHAW, MAY 1970

I just used electricity to wrap it up in. Probably I wasn't ready yet to make it simple. It's more complicated playing an electric guitar because you're 5 or 10 feet away from the sound and you strain for things that you don't have to when the sound is right next to your body. Anyway it's the song itself that matters, not the sound of the song.

I only look at them musically, I only look at them as things to sing. It's the music that the words are sung to that's important. I write the songs because I need something to sing. It's the difference between the words on paper and the song. The song disappears into the air, the paper stays. They have little in common. A great poet, like Wallace Stevens, doesn't necessarily make a great singer. But a great singer always—like Billie Holiday—makes a great poet.

I could have sung each of them better. I'm not exactly dissatisfied but I'm just not about to brag about the performance. In writing songs I have one great trouble. I'm lazy. I wish I could but you're not going to find me sitting down at the piano every morning. Either it comes or doesn't. Of course some songs, like 'Restless Farewell,' I've written just to fill up an album. And there are songs in which I made up a whole verse just to get to another verse.

I didn't do this in *John Wesley Harding*. It holds over better. I've always tried to get simple. I haven't always succeeded. But here I took more care in the writing.

New York City, January 1968.

Nashville Skyline.

They are the songs I've been writing over the past year. Some are songs that I've sung and never written down and just sort of turn up again.

I can't remember where they come from. I was just sitting down trying to write some notes on where the songs came from and I couldn't figure it out myself.

New York City, March 1969.

I can't remember too much about how I wrote the new songs. It depends on where I am, what the weather is like and who is around at the time. The music is a little of everything. You'll know what it is when you hear it. I can't remember that much about it. The new songs are easy to sing and there aren't too many words to remember.

New York City, February 1969.

These are the type of songs that I always felt like writing when I've been alone to do so. The songs reflect more of the inner me than the songs of the past. They're more to my base than, say *John Wesley Harding*. There I felt everyone expected me to be a poet so that's what I tried to be. But the smallest line in this new album means more to me than some of the songs on any of the previous albums I've made. I admire the spirit to the music. It's got a good spirit. Like a good door, a good house, a good car, a good road, a good girl. I feel like writing a whole lot more of them too.

I like 'Tell Me That It Isn't True,' although it came out completely different than I'd written it. It came out real slow and mellow. I had it written as sort of a jerky, kind of polka-type thing. I wrote it in F. I wrote a lot of songs on this new album in F. That's what gives it kind of a new sound. They're all in F . . . not all of them, but quite a few. There's not many on that album that aren't in F. So you see I had those chords . . . which gives it a certain sound. I try to be a little different on every album.

New York City, December 1969.

Self Portrait.

I didn't live with those songs for too long. Those were just scraped together.

To, say, make a point or pay tribute to songwriters you liked?

Yes.

Montreal, January 1974.

Dylan.

I've heard the songs were mostly outtakes from the Self Portrait *sessions.*

They were not to be used. I thought it was well understood. They were just not to be used. I thought it was well understood. They were just to warm up for a tune.

I didn't think it was that bad, really! [*laughs*].

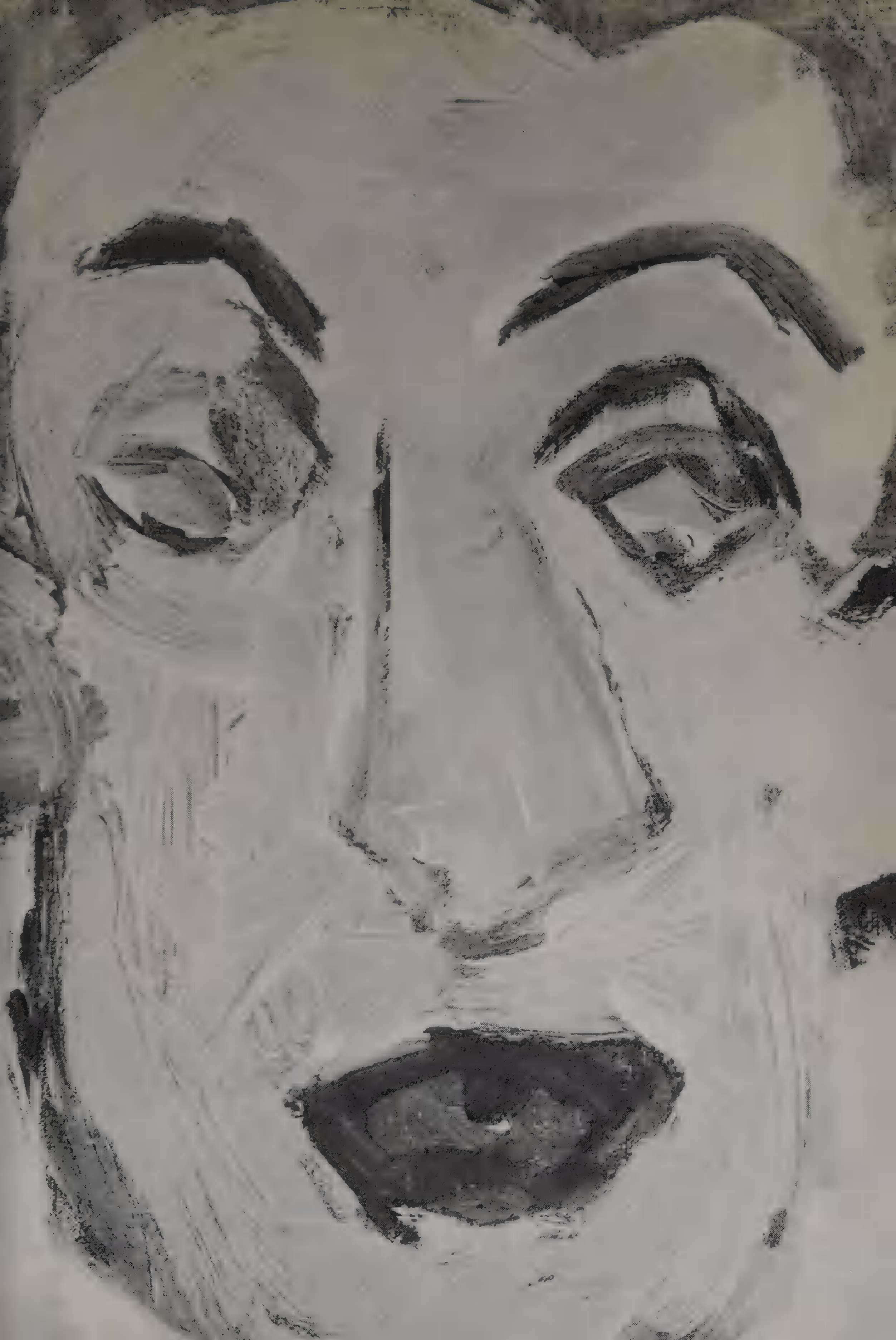
Montreal, January 1974.

Blood On The Tracks.

A lot of people tell me they enjoy that album. It's hard for me to relate to that, I mean, it, you know, people enjoying the type of pain, you know?

New York City, September 1975.

DETAIL FROM 'SELF PORTRAIT' ALBUM SLEEVE



Films & Books.

In a recent Broadside interview, Phil Ochs said you should do films. Do you have any plans to do this?

No, I don't a . . . I have plans to make a film, but not because anybody said I should do them.

How soon will this be?

Next year probably.

Can you tell us what it'll be about?

It'll be just another song.

Who are the people making films that you dig particularly?

Truffaut. I really can't think of any more people. Italian movie directors, y'know, but not too many people in England or the United States which I really think that I would dig.

You did a Chaplin bit as an exit line in one of your concerts once.

I did! That musta been an accident, Have to stay away from that kinda thing! [*aside*] Oh that's pretty. Well thank you very much! Was that taken right here with a polaroid? Hm. Good God, I must leave right away [*laughter*].

San Francisco, December 1965.

Bob, what is the reason for your visit to Los Angeles?

Oh, I'm here looking for some junkies [*giggles from audience*] I'm making a movie about uh, I'm making a movie about uh Jesus.

Where are you making it?

Back east.

What kind of film? Are you serious?

Yes. It's an independent film.

What type of film?

I don't really want to talk about it, you know when you talk about those things . . . I'm sure everybody understands. Uh, that's why I'm here in California. Besides I was playing a few times here and there, uh, I'm really here on business.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

Bob, do you have any movie plans coming up in the near future?

Yeah.

What would you like to do?

[*laughs*] [*mutters to himself*] This is very tragic. We'll just make a movie.

Would you play yourself? Or would you actually act?

No. I'm gonna play my mother. [*laughter*].

How will you do that?

How will I do that?

Yeah.

It's very simple really if you think about it. [*laughter*].

Would you think about it and tell us?

No. No. I just do things. I don't think at all. I don't . . .

What would you call the movie, any idea?

Uh, no. Uh, "Mother Revisited". [*laughter*].

Los Angeles, December 1965.

Don't Look Back.

1965 British tour film.

You know this movie, *Don't Look Back.* Well that splashed my face all over the world, that movie *Don't Look Back.* I didn't get a *penny* from that movie, you know . . . so when people say why don't you go out and work and why don't you do this and why don't you do that, people don't know *half* of what a lot of these producers and people, lawyers . . . they don't know the half of those stories. I'm an easy-going kind of fellow, you know . . . I forgive and forget. I like to think that way. But I'm not interested in finding out anymore about any film

Did you like Don't Look Back*?*

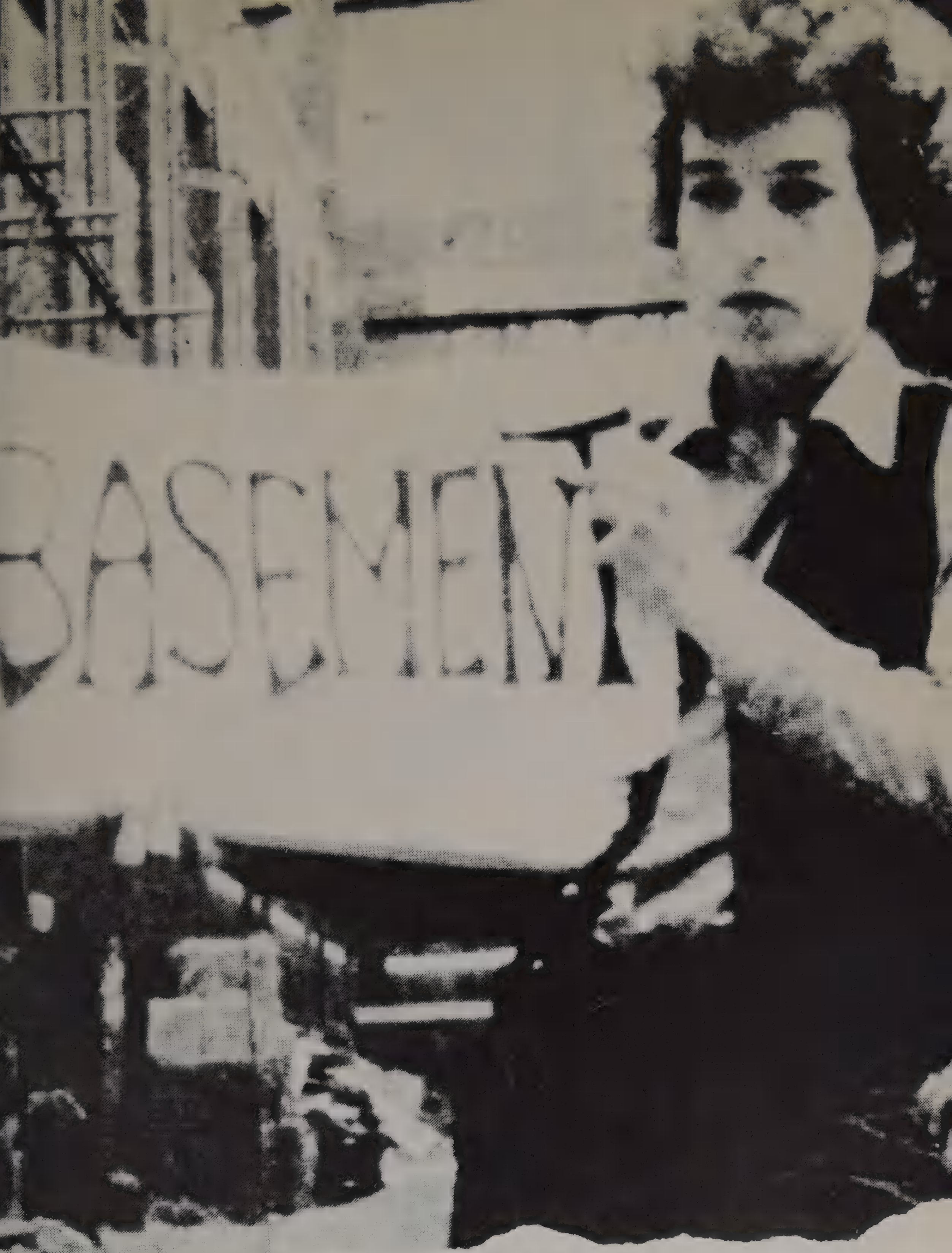
I'd like it a lot more if I got paid for it. [*laughter*].

New York City, October 1969.

Don't Look Back was . . . somebody else's movie. It was a deal worked out with a film company, but I didn't really play any part in it. When I saw it in a moviehouse, I was shocked at what had been done. I didn't find out until later that the camera had been on me all the time. That movie was done by a man who took it all out of context. It was documented from his personal point of view. The movie was dishonest, it was a propaganda movie. I don't think it was accurate at all in terms of showing my formative years. It showed only one side. He made it seem like I wasn't doing anything but

STILL FROM 'PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID'

living in hotel rooms, playing the typewriter and holding press conferences for journalists. All that is true, you know. Throwing some bottles, there's something about it in the movie. Joan Baez is in it. But it's one-sided. Let's not lean on it too hard. It just wasn't representative of what was happening in the Sixties.



I wasn't really a star in those days, any more than I'm a star these days. I was very obviously confused then as to what my purpose was. It was pretty early, you know. 'The Times They Are A-Changin' was on the English charts then, so it had to be pretty early.

Malibu, January 1978.

ALBERT HALL 1965

Eat The Document.

1966 European tour film.

Well, we cut it fast on the eye. It's fast on the eye. I'd have to let you see it for yourself, to think about if it's a good one. For me, it's too fast for the eye . . . but there are quite a few people who say it's *really* good. Johnny Cash is in it. John Lennon's in it. The Band's in it. Who else . . . a lot of different people from the European capitals of the world are in it.

Princes and princesses? [*laughs*]

Well not princesses [*laughs*] but presidents [*laughs*] and people like that.

New York City, October 1969.

That started as a television special. I wasn't the maker of that film, either. I was the—I was the victim. They had already shot film, but at that time, of course, I did—I had a—if I hadn't gotten into that motorcycle accident, they would have broadcast it, and that would have been that. But I was sort of—I was taken out of it, you know, and—I think it was the fall of that year. I had a little more time to, you know, concentrate on what was happening to me and what had happened.

Anyway, what had happened was that they had made another *Don't Look Back,* only this time it was for television. I had nothing better to do than to see the film. All of it, including unused footage. And it was obvious from looking at the film that it was garbage. It was miles and miles of garbage. That was my introduction to film. My film concept was all formed in those early days when I was looking at that footage.

Malibu, January 1978.

Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid.

In Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid, *do you think that you pretty much played the role of Dylan?*

I don't know who I played. I tried to play whoever it was in the story, but I guess it's a known fact that there was nobody in that story that was the character I played.

Would you like to be a movie star?

I'm not a movie star, but I've got a vision to put up on the screen. Someday we'll get around to doing it. The Peckinpah experience was valuable in terms of getting near the big action.

Will you do a couple of films on your own

STILL FROM 'PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID'

before producing the "vision"?

The Peckinpah movie brought me as close as I'll get. I've been on movie sets and TV shows, but they were small-time compared. They spent $4,$5 million on *Billy The Kid,* had all the top people. So that was really heavy. Gave me that vibration. When I finally do mine, it'll have that vibration.

How'd you happen to get involved in Billy The Kid?

Just one thing into another. [*pause*] They took me on because I was a big name.

How'd you feel, seeing the rushes of your scenes?

I've seen myself on screen. Movies don't impress me. That part didn't scare me off at all. Just hoped I didn't get shot during the movie!

Montreal, January 1974.

Renaldo & Clara.

The movie to me is more a painting than music. It *is* a painting. It's a painting coming alive off a wall. That's why we're making it. Painters can contain their artistic turmoil; in another age, moviemakers would most likely be painters.

Malibu, January 1978.

It's about the essence of man being alienated from himself and how, in order to free himself, to be reborn, he has to go outside himself. You can almost say that he dies in order to look at time and by strength of will can return to the same body.

Clara represents to Renaldo everything in the material world he's ever wanted. Renaldo's needs are few. He doesn't know it, though, at that particular time.

He tries to escape from the demon within, but he discovers that the demon is, in fact, a mirrored reflection of Renaldo himself.

In order to legitimize this film, we confronted it head on. The persona of Bob Dylan is in the movie so we could get rid of it. There should no longer be any mystery as to who or what he is—he's there, speaking in all kinds of tongues, and there's even someone else claiming to be him, so he's covered.

This movie is obvious, you know. Nobody's hiding anything. It's all right there. The rabbits are falling out of the hat before the movie begins.

I had the idea for doing my own film back in '66. And I buried it until '76. My lawyer used to tell me there was a future in movies. So I said,

STILL FROM 'PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID'

"What kind of future?" He said, "Well, if you can come up with a script, an outline and get money from a big distributor." But I knew I couldn't work that way. I can't betray my vision on a little piece of paper in hopes of getting some money from somebody. In the final analysis, it turned out that I had to make the movie all by myself, with people who would work with me, who trusted me. I went on the road in '76 to make the money for this movie. My last two tours were to raise the money for it.

I feel it's a story that means a great deal to me, and I got to do what I always wanted to do—make a movie. When something like that happens, it's like stopping time, and you can make people live into that moment. Not many things can do that in your daily life. You can be distracted by many things. But the main point is to make it meaningful to someone.

Take *Shane,* for example. That moved me. *On the Waterfront* moved me. So when I go to see a film, I expect to be moved. I don't want to go see a movie just to kill time, or to have it just show me something I'm not aware of. I want to be moved, because that's what art is supposed to do, according to all the great theologians. Art is supposed to take you out of your chair. It's supposed to move you from one space to another.

Renaldo & Clara is not meant to put a strain on you. It's a movie to be enjoyed as a movie. I know nothing about film, I'm not a film maker. On the other hand, I do consider myself a film maker because I made this film. So I don't know . . .If it doesn't move you, then it's a grand, grand failure.

Malibu, January 1978.

Tarantula.

I've written some songs which are kind of far out—a long continuation of verses, stuff like that—but I haven't really gotten into writing a completely *free* song. Hey, you dig something like cut-ups? I mean like William Burroughs?

That's where it's at. Because that's what it means anyway. Okay, I wrote the book because there's a lot of stuff in there I can't possibly sing—all the collages. I can't sing it because it gets too long or it goes too far out. I can only do it around a few people who would know. Because the majority of the audience—I don't care where they're from, how hip they are—I think it would just get totally lost. Something that had no rhyme, all cut up, no nothing, except something happening—which is words.

STILL FROM 'RENALDO AND CLARA'

You wrote the book to say something?

Yeah, but certainly not any kind of profound statement. The book don't begin or end.

Los Angeles, September 1965.

Uh . . . I was writing it and . . . I still have a lot of words written for it but I can't use anything I've written up to, uh, anything I've written before a year ago I can't really use. The style is just . . . I can't use the ideas they're so, they're so deformed and a, and just not really right ideas. Stuff which has been expressed you know, a million times, you know in the past, and anybody can see it does no good to talk about things which just don't make any sense to talk about, you know. Now. I don't write now unless it just happens. I used to write before for a lot of reasons, of a, I used to be in New York City you know where you could just about pick where you wanted it to be what you wrote, see who was doing it and just went where there was nobody doing anything and I wrote that and now, who needs to write it anymore? Everybody writes it now! You know people in Omaha, Nebraska write protest songs you know, haha.

It's called, it's called *Tarantula.* It's just a . . .

Detroit, October 1965.

It's a long story. It begins with when I suddenly began to sell quite a few records, and a certain amount of publicity began to be carried in all the major news magazines about this "rising young star." Well, this industry being what it is, book companies began sending me contracts, *because* I was doing interviews before and after concerts, and reporters would say things like "What else do you write?" And I would say, "Well, I don't write much of anything else." And they would say, "Oh, come on. You must write other things. Tell us something else. Do you write books?" And I'd say, "Sure, I write books."

After the publishers saw that I wrote books they began to send me contracts . . . Doubleday, Macmillan, Hill and Range [*laughter*] . . . we took the biggest one, and then owed them a book. You follow me?

But there was no book. We just took the biggest contract. Why? I don't know. Why I *did,* I don't know. Why I was *told* to do it, I don't know. Anyway, I owed them a book.

So I sat down, and said "Wow, I've done many things before, it's not so hard to write a book." So I sat down and wrote them a book in the hotel rooms and different places, plus I got a lot of other papers laying around that other people had written, so I threw it all together in a week and sent it to them.

Well, it wasn't long after that when I got it back to proof read it. I got it back and I said "My gosh, did I write this? I'm not gonna have this out." Do you know what I mean?"I'm not gonna put this out. The folks back home just aren't going to understand this at all." I said, "Well, I have to do some corrections on this," I told them, and set about correcting it. I told them I was improving it.

Boy they were hungry for this book. They didn't care what it was. They just wanted . . . people up there were saying "Boy, that's the second James Joyce," and "Jack Kerouac again" and they were saying "Homer revisited" . . .and they were all just talking through their heads.

They just wanted to sell *books,* that's all they wanted to do. It wasn't about anything . . . and I knew that—I figured they *had* to know that, they were in the business of it. I knew that, and I was just nobody. If I knew it, where were they at? They were just playing with me. My book.

So I wrote a new book. I figured I was satisfied with it and I sent that in. Wow, they looked at that and said "Well, that's another book." And I said, "Well, but it's better." And they said, "Okay, we'll print this." So they printed that up and sent that back to proof read it. So I proof read it—I just looked at the first paragraph—and knew I just couldn't let that stand. So I took the whole thing with me on tour. I was going to rewrite it all. Carried a typewriter around . . . around the world. Trying to meet this deadline which they'd given me to put this book out. They just backed me into a corner. A lot of invisible people. So finally, I had a deadline on it, and was working on it, before my motorcycle accident. And I was studying all kinds of different prints and how I wanted them to print the book, by this time. I also was studying a lot of other poets at this time . . .I had books which I figured could lead me somewhere . . . and I was using a little bit from everything.

But still, it wasn't any book; it was just to satisfy the publishers who wanted to print something that we had a contract for. Follow me? So eventually, I had my motorcycle accident and that just got me out of the whole thing, 'cause I didn't care anymore. As it stands now I could write a book. But I'm gonna write it first, and then give it to them.

New York City, November 1969.

ORIGINAL COVER TO 'TARANTULA' ALBUM

TO MY
TRUE
BE TRUE TO

The Rock 'n' Roll Lifestyle.

Drugs.

Some of your critics say that you have no real purpose in mind when you write a song except to shock people.

Now you know that's not true. You've heard the songs haven't you?

Yes.

Well you know that's not true then.

I think 'Puff the Magic Dragon' and 'The Family Man' were considered by some to be endorsements of marijuana smoking.

Well I didn't write 'Puff the Magic Dragon' that's a horrible . . .that's a . . .I didn't write that, whatever that is, I didn't write that. And 'Mr Tambourine Man' there's no marijuana in that song, at least I've never heard of it before.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

People just don't need drugs. Keep things out of your body. We all take medicine, as long as you know why you're taking it. If you want to crack down on the drug situation, the criminal drug situation takes place in suburban housewives' kitchens, the ones who get wiped out on alcohol every afternoon and then make supper. You can't blame them and you can't blame their husbands. They've been working in the mines all day. It's understandable.

New York City, 1965.

You kinda mumble and you slur. In the old days y'know Sinatra on his fiftieth birthday was complaining about the new modern singers, of their pronunciation and . . .

Well the new modern singers are much too sick nowadays to . . .

Well how about yourself, are you sick?

I have a nervous disease and this keeps . . . kick on that like you would kick on a cripple . . . or something, y'know.

Oh, you're not the only one. It's like a modern thing.

It certainly isn't any style that's like harmful to anybody . . .

But if they don't understand the words.

They can't understand the words?

There's such a widespread news . . . am I . . do you take drugs or something?

I don't know, I don't know I've ever seen a drug. I wouldn't know.

Real way out music and drugs . . .

I have no idea . . .

Los Angeles, December 1965.

This is a personal question here and I hope you'll forgive it, but you sound and you look very tired. Are you ill or is this your normal state?

Well I take it as an insult! I don't like to hear that, that kind of thing.

I don't mean to offend you but we can hardly hear you and you look weary.

Well I'm from New York City and you're all from California and you have this health thing. I don't know, I feel quite embarrassed about it same way you do, probably, but I don't know, I have no explanation for it.

Bob, what about the nervous condition that you mentioned to us?

Uhhh . . .

Is that evident?

I keep that very well concealed.

Are you taking medication for it?

Ah yes, yes, medication. What d'you mean, drugs? [*laughter*] What kind of questions are those? I'm not taking drugs . . .

Los Angeles, December 1965.

Would you talk of any of the positive things that drugs have to offer, how they might have affected your work?

I wouldn't think they have anything to offer. I'm speaking about drugs in the everyday sense of the word. From my own experience they would have nothing positive to offer, but I'm not speaking for anyone else. Someone else might see them offering a great deal.

FEBRUARY 1963

WITH SUZE ROTOLO 1963

WITH JOAN BAEZ, 1964

But in the way of insights or new combinations it never affected you that way?

No, you get those same insights over a period of time anyway.

New York City, November 1968.

Grass was everywhere in the clubs. It was always there in the jazz clubs; and in the folk-music clubs. There was just grass and it was available to musicians in those days. And in coffee houses way back in Minneapolis. That's where I first came into contact with it, I'm sure. I forget when or where, really.

Being a musician means—depending on how far you go—getting to the depths of where you are at. And most any musician would try anything to get to those depths, because playing music is an immediate thing—as opposed to putting paint on a canvas, which is a calculated thing. Your spirit flies when you are playing music. So, with music, you tend to look deeper and deeper inside yourself to find the music. That's why, I guess, grass was around those clubs. I know the whole scene has changed now; I mean, pot is almost a legal thing. But in the old days, it was just for a few people.

Psychedelics never influenced me. I don't know, I think Timothy Leary had a lot to do with driving the last nails into the coffin of that New York scene we were talking about. When psychedelics happened, everything became irrelevant. Because that had nothing to do with making music or writing poems or trying to really find yourself in that day and age.

People were deluded into thinking they were something that they weren't: birds, airplanes, fire hydrants, whatever. People were walking around thinking they were stars.

Malibu, January 1978.

Sex.

Would you classify sex among your wants, wherever you go?

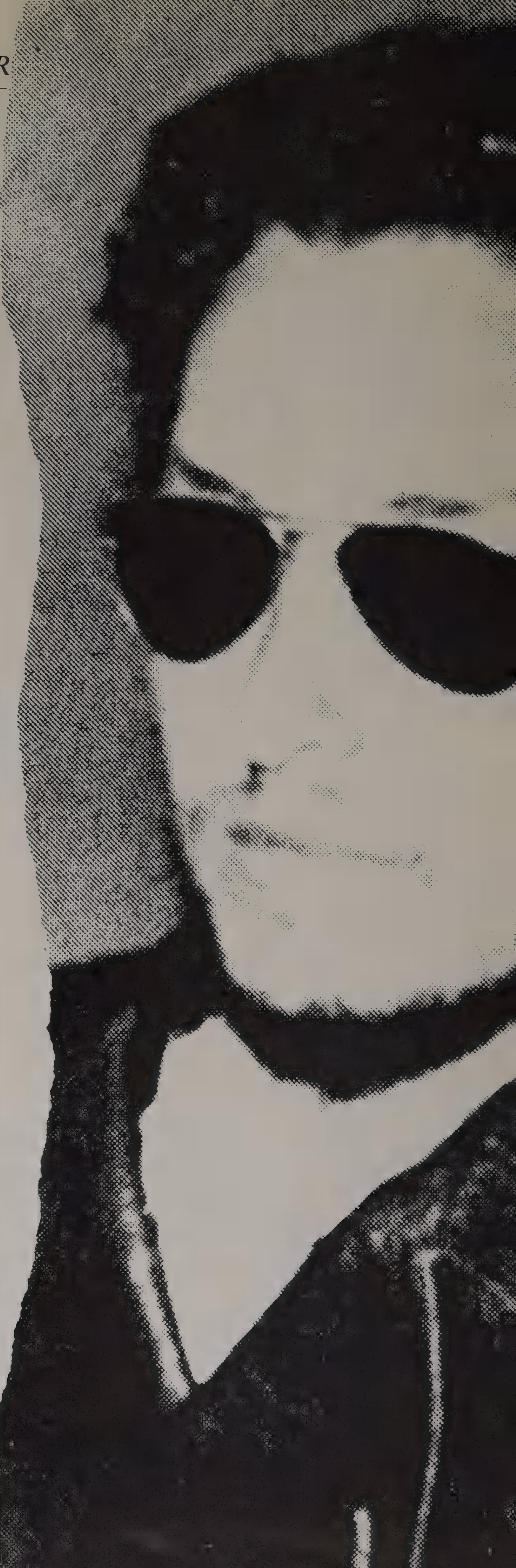
Sex is a temporary thing; sex isn't love. You can get sex anywhere. If you're looking for someone to *love* you, now that's different. I guess you have to stay in college for that.

New York City, January 1966.

Do you participate in the new theme? Sexual freedom and so forth . . .

I don't participate in anything! [*laughter*] Nothing! I bet you couldn't name one thing that I participate in. Go ahead, I dare you! [*laughter*].

San Francisco, December 1965



RETURNING FROM THE ISLE OF WIGHT WITH SARAH, 1969

JUNE, 1964

Have you ever lain with somebody when your hearts were beating in the same rhythm? That's true love. A man and a woman who lie down with their hearts beating together are truly lucky. Then you've truly been in love, m' boy. Yeah, that's true love. You might see that person once a month, once a year, maybe once a lifetime, but you have the guarantee your lives are going to be in rhythm. That's all you need.

Malibu, January 1978.

Politics.

People have told me that there was a man running for President and quoting me. I don't know if that's good or bad, but he's just another guy running for President.

I sometimes dream of running the country and putting all my friends in office. That's the way it works now, anyway. I'd like to see Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and a few of those other guys to come back. If they did I'd go out and vote. They knew what was happening.

Malibu, September 1976.

My mind works in—er, kinda strange ways.

No politics. It would be just impossible for me to stand up and be associated with any political party. They are all crap—every single one of them is crap. They all think they are better than the next one. Huh.

It's okay for someone who wants to be in a political party, but not me. They stand up there trying to tell me what is good and what's bad and what ought to be done.

They've got a commodity to sell and that commodity is themselves. Politics is just a commercial bandwagon.

London, May 1965.

I don't want to hurt anyone, you know. I don't want to put anyone down. I've no principles, no morals. I just go along. No one influences me any more. I'm on my own.

I'm not going anywhere. But I'm changing. I can't listen to my old songs now.

London, May 1965.

I have no message for anyone, my songs are only me talking to myself. I don't want to influence people in any way. It is other people who influence me about life.

London, May 1965.

Yes, I guess I do get pretty cross about things. I hate injustice, that's why I sing about racial discrimination and freedom, and I preach for people to be able to do the things they want.

On some of my earlier records, I sounded cross because I was poor. Lived on less than ten cents a day in those times. Now I'm cross because I'm rich.

London, May 1965.

I don't talk much. I haven't a lot to say. I just don't want to upset people.

You know, people set out to do something and they get so worked up about things that they get violent.

Heck, I don't want to louse anyone up. I'm just me. I'm not spreading disillusionment by singing the truth.

I guess listening to me is like reading a newspaper. I wanna be entertaining as well as truthful.

London, May 1965.

Are you planning any demonstrations?

Well we thought of one, [*chuckles*] we thought of one, I don't know if it could be organised in time.

Would you describe it?

Uh, well, it was a demonstration where I make up the cards you know. They have, uh, they have a group of protesters here, perhaps carrying cards with pictures of the Jack of Diamonds on them, and the Ace of Spades on them. Pictures of mules, maybe words and, oh maybe about 25 – 30,000 of these things printed up and just picket. Carry signs and picket, in front of the post office.

What words?

Oh. Words: "Camera" [*laughter*], "microphone" [*laughter*], "loose", just words. Names of some famous people.

Do you consider yourself a politician?

Do I consider myself a politician? Well. I guess so. I have my own party though.

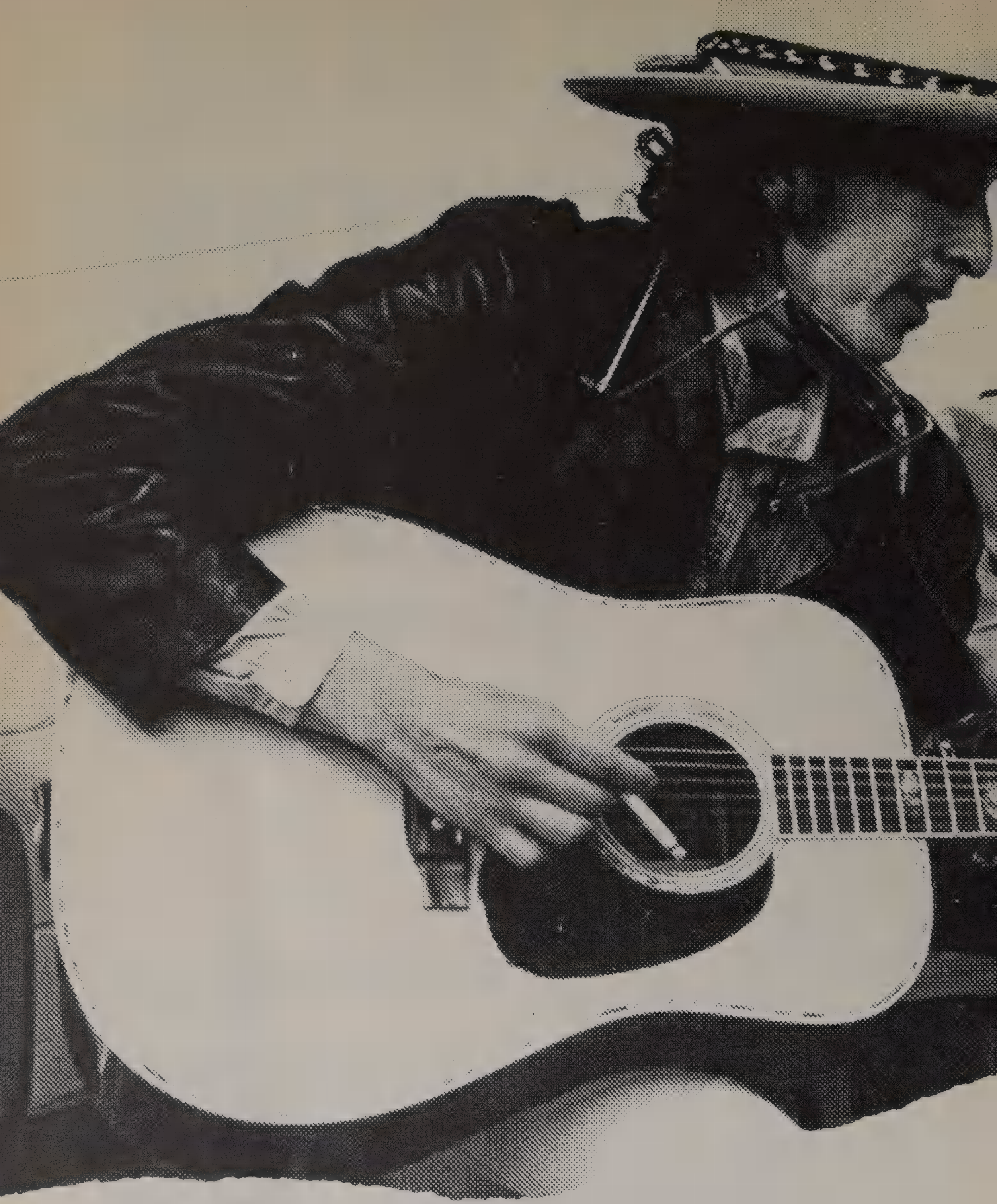
Does it have a name?

No. There's no presidents in the party. There's no presidents or vice-presidents or secretaries or anything like that so it makes it kinda hard to get in.

Is there any right wing or left wing in that party?

No. It's more or less in the centre. Kind of on the Upitty scale.

GLASGOW 1966



Do you think your party could end the war with China?

Uh. I don't know. I don't know if they have any people over there that would be in the same kind of party. Y'know? So it might be kinda hard to infiltrate. I don't think my party would ever be approved of by the White House or anything like that.

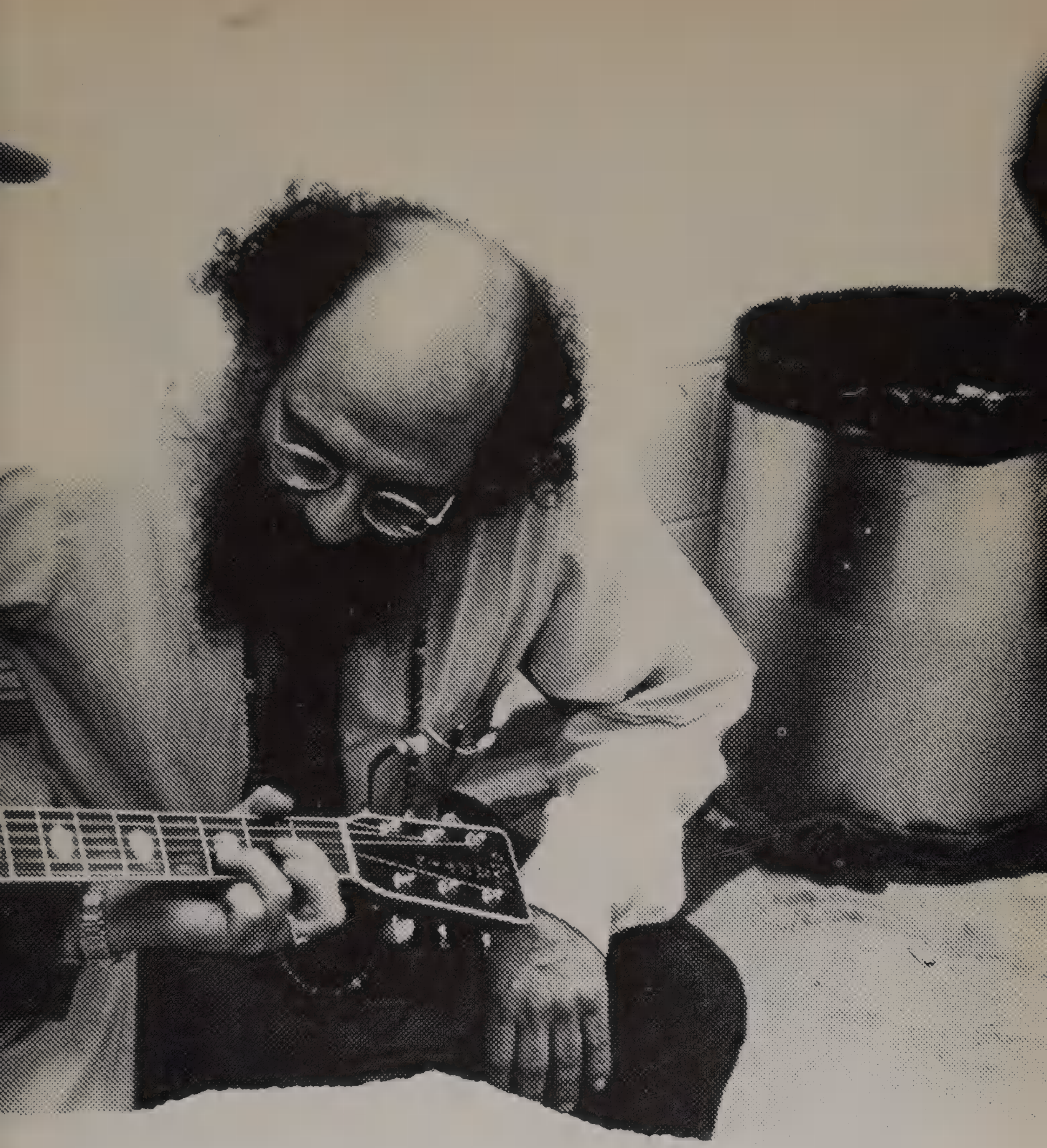
Is there anyone else in your party?

Anyone else in the party? No. Most of us don't even know each other y'know. It's hard to tell who's in it and who's not in it.

Would you recognise them if you see them?

Oh, you can recognise the people when you see them. [*laughter*]

San Francisco, December 1965.

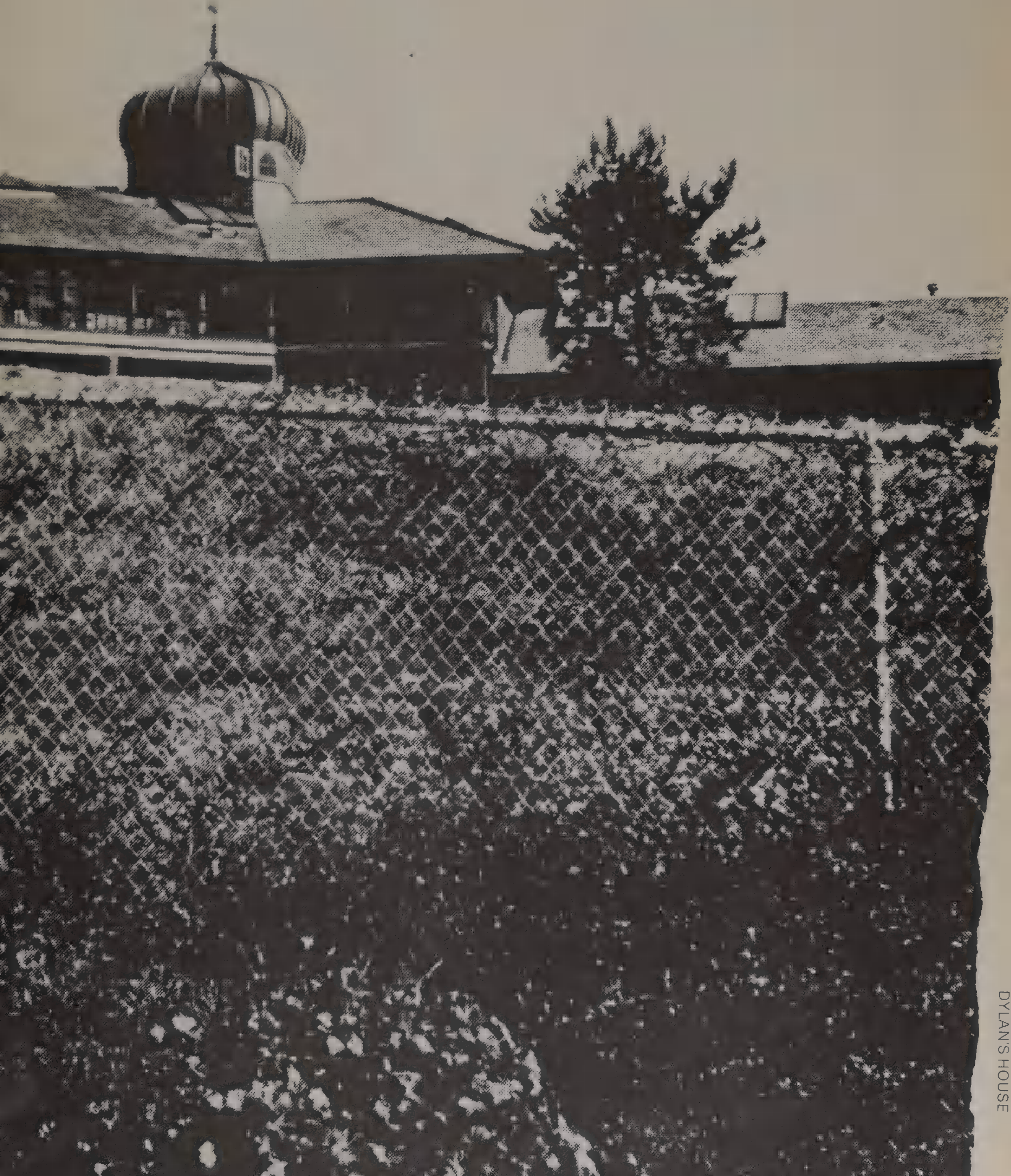


I have always considered politics just part of the illusion. I don't get involved much in politics. I don't know what the system runs on.

For instance, there are people who have definite ideas or who studied all the systems of government. A lot of those people with college-educational backgrounds tended to come in and use up everybody for whatever purposes they had in mind. And, of course, they used music, because music was accessible and we would have done that stuff and written those songs and sung them whether there was any politics or not. I never did renounce a role in politics, because I never played one in politics. It would be comical for me to think that I played a role. Gurdjieff thinks it's best to work out your mobility daily.

I am interested in all aspects of life. Revelations and realizations. Lucid thought that can be translated into songs, analogies, new information. I am better at it now. Not really written yet anything to make me stop writing. Like, I haven't come to the place that Rimbaud came to when he decided to stop writing and run guns in Africa.

Malibu, January 1978.



DYLAN'S HOUSE

SCUFFLING WITH PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER, CALIFORNIA, 1977

Money.

I have more money, I just have a lot more money, is all. I have no remorse. I don't care. Uncle Sam, he's my UNCLE, he's a member of the family! Can't turn your back on a member of the family!

I don't know how much I make. I have no idea and I don't want to ever find out. You see a lot of people start out and they plan to try to be stars. Like they have to be stars. I mean I know a lot of these people. And they start out and they go into show business for many, many reasons. To be seen, y'know. I started out and this had nothing to do with it. It just happened. I haven't really struggled for that. It happened. You know? It happened like anything else happens. Just a happening. You don't try to figure out happenings. You dig happenings. I really have no idea. That is the truth. I always tell the truth. That is the truth.

Austin, Texas, 1966.

I spend most of what I get now, anyway—and how I spend it is my business. Not on material things. I don't need ten cars, a mansion and a yacht.

Of course, I'd be a fool to say money means nothing to me, but I don't really care.

London, April 1965.

I can live in a shack. I don't care if someone owns a bank. Why should they care if I make bread.

London, May 1965.

I don't talk about money because I don't recognise it.

London, May 1965.

I don't know of anything I could invest in that would make a better person of me. I have lots of friends here in Greenwich Village—writers, painters, folk-singers—I like to help them. I think it's a gas to walk down the street and give a bum a $10.00 bill.

New York City, September 1963.

I don't get, I don't get, I don't know how much I make. I have no idea how much I make and I don't want to ever find out.

Do you spend a lot?

Yeah, I spend a lot I guess . . .

Maybe Billy James [of Columbia] can answer that?

No he wouldn't answer that either [*laughter*]. Don't ask me how much he makes!

What do you spend your money on? You seem to live a very simple, uncomplicated life?

Uhh, you can easily see that can't you? Huh?

You don't seem to be interested in motorcars, girls, yachts . . .

Ah well, that's the way it goes . . .

I'm trying to figure out what you do with the money . . .

I spend money on, you know, whatever's there that I want to spend money on that I want to buy.

Do you have investments? Do you buy apartment houses?

Gee, I don't know. I don't know what happens to my money, I get, you know. When I want money I go ask for it and I get it! And I spend it and when I want more I go ask for it and I get it! That's all. It's very simple really.

Los Angeles, December 1965.

The myth of the starving artist is a myth. The big bankers and prominent young ladies who buy art started it. They just want to keep the artist under their thumb. Who says an artist can't have any money? Look at Picasso. The starving artist is usually starving for those around him to starve. You don't have to starve to be a good artist. You just have to have love, insight and a strong point of view. And you have to fight off depravity. Uncompromising, that's what makes a good artist. It doesn't matter if he has money or not. Look at Matisse; he was a banker. Anyway, there are other things that constitute wealth and poverty besides money.

Malibu, January 1978.

Death.

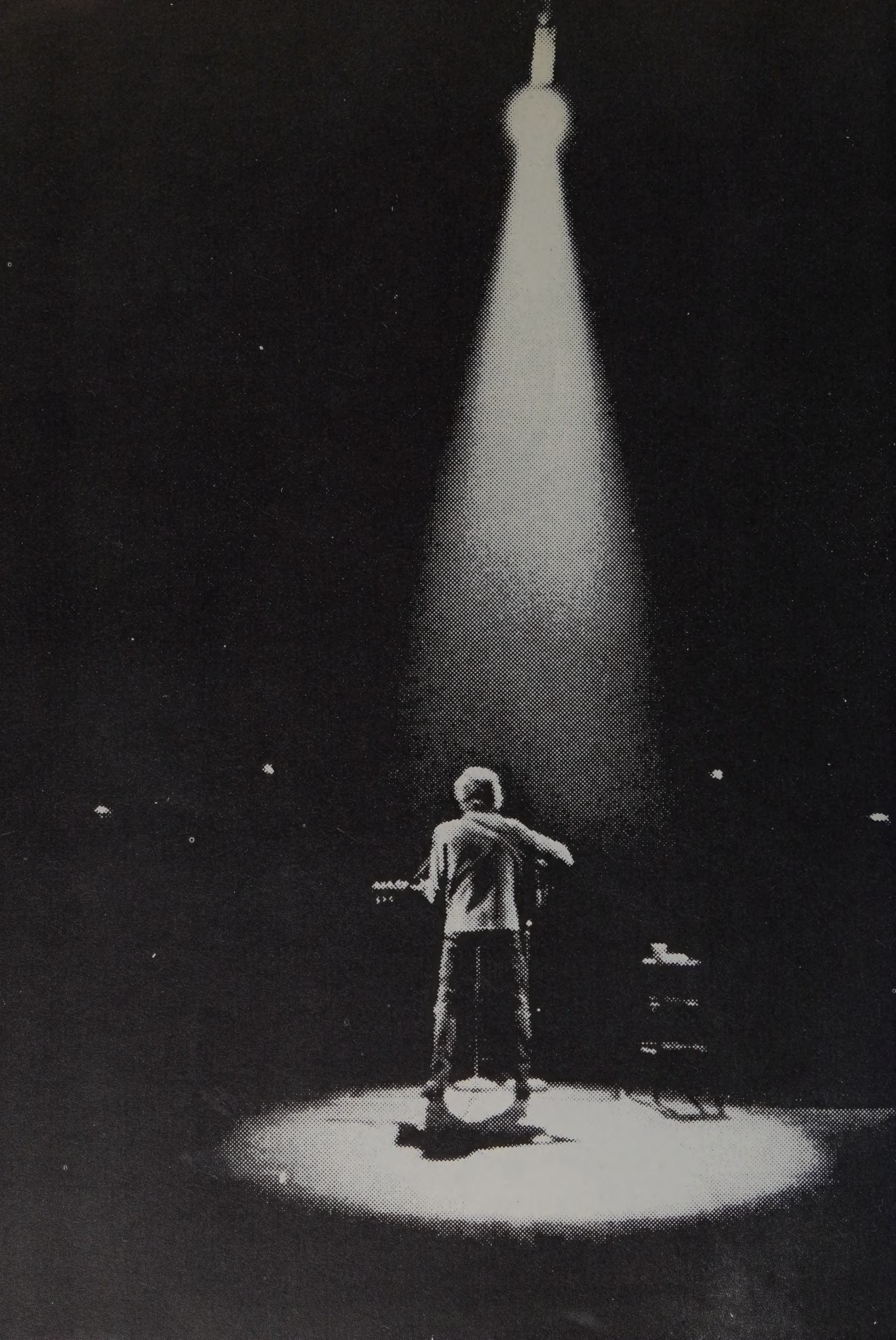
Well, certain truths I know. Not necessarily myself but a certain accumulation of experience that has become real to me and a knowledge that I acquired on the road.

One is that if you try to be anyone but yourself, you will fail; if you are not true to your own heart, you will fail. Then again, there's no success like failure. We're not looking to succeed. Just by our being and acting alive, we succeed. You fail only when you let death creep in and take over a part of your life that should be alive.

Death don't come knocking at the door. It's there in the morning when you wake up.

Did you ever clip your fingernails, cut your hair? Then you experience death.

Malibu, January 1978.



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